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**An Investigation into East-Asian
Acculturation and Consumer
Complaint Behaviour in a UK
University**

David John Hart

PhD

2008

**An Investigation into East-Asian
Acculturation and Consumer
Complaint Behaviour in a UK
University**

David John Hart

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the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Newcastle Business School

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Abstract

This study investigates the acculturation and consumer complaint behaviours (CCB) of East-Asian students at Northumbria University, located in North-East England. Approximately 70,000 East-Asians are currently enrolled for graduate study in the UK. However, little is known about their adaptation to an unfamiliar culture, and their complaint behaviours when placed in such an environment. In particular, there is a need to understand the complaint behaviours of East-Asian students in the context of Higher Education.

For both acculturation and CCB a literature survey included the key theoretical frameworks and variables that can impact upon both concepts, leading to the development of four research questions that provided the focus for the data collection process. The first research question investigated if a relationship exists between the acculturation style adopted by East-Asian students and their complaint behaviours. From here, the additional research questions focused on respondent's acculturation and CCB experiences throughout their sojourn.

The study utilised a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure all research questions were addressed. Initially, an online survey was administered, followed by a number of semi-structured interviews with a sample of survey respondents.

Survey results suggest only weak correlations between acculturation styles and complaint behaviours: those who integrate into UK culture show a higher propensity to publicly complain (e.g. write to lecturers), whilst those who separate themselves from other cultures are more likely to do nothing in response to dissatisfactory experiences. A general willingness to publicly voice concerns over university performance is moderated by fears that complaints may compromise final degree classifications. In terms of cultural adaptation, the greatest challenges faced were functional in nature (e.g. opening bank accounts), and respondents reported a lack of interaction with local students which limited opportunities to improve their English language ability.

This study advances the understanding of the East-Asian student experience, is the first to consider if acculturation is a relevant variable in the complaint behaviour process and also draws attention to the importance of student complaints as a major issue in student retention.

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List of Common Abbreviations

CCB	Consumer Complaint Behaviour
EAAM	East Asian-Acculturation Measure
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Good
HE	Higher Education
OIAHE	Office for the Independent Adjudicator of Higher Education
SCBS	Student Complaint Behaviours Survey
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America

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Having such a fantastic support network is crucial to any student undertaking a PhD, and without all of the above people both my working and personal life would have been a far less enjoyable experience. Don't worry everyone; hopefully I can now have my life back!

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work.

Name: David Hart

Signature:

Date: 26th September 2008

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter will serve to provide a broad introduction to the overall thesis. Initially, the reasons for the topic selection and importance of understanding the international student experience will be discussed, and this will be followed by a brief introduction to acculturation and consumer complaint behaviour (CCB), the two subject areas which form the focus of the thesis. From this point, the chapter will outline the objectives and research questions of the study and discuss the proposed contribution to knowledge made in the thesis (which is reviewed in Chapter Eight). The chapter will conclude by introducing Northumbria University as the site for the data collection process and providing an overview of the upcoming chapters in the thesis.

1.2 Reasons for Topic Selection

UK Universities have been considered as multi-cultural communities for many years, attracting scholars from across the world to enhance their academic reputation. Despite this, the actual number of international students enrolling with UK universities was relatively low until the recent changes to how Higher Education (HE) is funded in the UK (Turner, 2006). These changes have forced universities to place increased emphasis on international recruitment, and in 2006 over 330,000 international students

were registered with HE institutions across the UK (representing 13% of the overall student body: UKCOSA, 2008).

Although numbers of international students coming to the UK have declined slightly since 2005, this still translates into a sizeable market: international students are worth approximately £2 billion to the UK HE sector each year (Times Online, 2006). Indeed, the sector has been criticised for placing too large a dependence on international student income – some institutions allocate up to one third of their places to international students. It is therefore unsurprising that a dedicated national advisory body (UK Council for International Students) has been set up specifically to look after the interests of international students. This increase appears to be something of an international trend: it has been reported that international students account for over half of the student population in some Australian universities (Noble, 2008).

One of the most attractive global segments that has been targeted by UK universities is the East-Asia region (taken from here as including Mainland China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam). Although actual statistics vary across different education bodies, it is estimated that there are over 70,000 East-Asian students currently studying in the UK, of which up to 30,000 are new recruits to the UK each academic year (UKCOSA, 2008). This figure is mainly comprised of students from Mainland China (estimated at 50,000), with a further 20,000 coming from Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Largely owing to increased

international competition this figure has decreased slightly in recent years, although it has been predicted that “the growth in the international education market within the next two decades will be dominated by Asia” (Arambewela, Hall and Zuhair, 2005, p. 105).

Research in the acculturation field has historically focused on the experiences of permanent immigrants, who may have moved to another culture for political or economic reasons. However, despite the obvious academic, economic and cultural benefits that are brought to UK universities by East-Asian students (Sodowsky and Plake, 1992), surprisingly little is known about their acculturation into UK culture. A review of the literature suggests that previous research has focused largely on the cross-national differences across educational systems and the problems these may cause international students. Whilst this is undeniably a key challenge encountered by international students, research has largely failed to consider the wider cultural adaptation experienced by East-Asian students throughout the period of their sojourn. Sojourn is defined here as “any form of temporary stay in an unfamiliar culture” (Hawker and Hawkins, 2001).

East-Asian students have travelled over 5,000 miles to study in the UK, and as such will have developed a range of expectations about their study abroad experience. If such expectations are not realised, this can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction which may be communicated with a variety of individuals. The communication of this dissatisfaction is known as

consumer complaint behaviour (CCB) and is an increasingly crucial issue for UK universities. With international student applications decreasing slightly in recent years, handling student complaints effectively has become a critical task in maximising levels of student retention. Indeed, a slightly dated study by Lapidus and Brown (1993) suggested that international students are not satisfied with their university experience. Clearly more needs to be understood about East-Asian students' likely responses to dissatisfaction in a HE scenario, and their wider attitudes towards complaining in a university environment.

The above discussion has highlighted two issues that are of particular importance to East-Asian students throughout their sojourn in the UK: acculturation (how they adapt to life in the UK and the key challenges faced throughout the process) and CCB (how they will react to dissatisfactory incidents and their general attitudes towards complaining in a HE environment). An understanding of these issues would be of great practical value to universities targeting East-Asian student cohorts: it is logical to assume that a positive acculturation process will make a student more likely to complete their course successfully. Equally, it has been shown that effective handling of complaints is crucial in maximising consumer (or in this case student) retention (Blodgett, 1994). Given the clear importance of both student acculturation and student complaint behaviour to the UK HE sector, these two concepts provide the focus for this thesis.

On a personal level, the researcher has long held an interest in the concepts of student satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the HE sector. As part of his undergraduate dissertation, the researcher investigated the common causes of student dissatisfaction and noted the apparent relevance of national culture in how students responded to such incidents. This led to an interest in how culture can influence complaint behaviour, and it was this area of study that introduced the researcher to the acculturation literature, a concept of obvious relevance to international students. Researchers have yet to explicitly address the concepts of acculturation and CCB in the same study, and this is identified as an intended contribution to knowledge in Section 1.5.

1.3 Introduction to Acculturation and CCB

The following section will provide a brief overview of the two concepts, providing definitions and some of the key theoretical models that will guide the current study. Both acculturation and CCB will be reviewed in greater detail in Chapters Two and Three respectively.

1.3.1 Acculturation

Whilst the study of culture focuses upon the values and behaviours that distinguish one group from another (Hofstede, 2001), acculturation is a more dynamic concept as it recognises that individuals may change their cultural values when exposed to other cultures. Cross-cultural interaction

may occur for a variety of reasons, including war, political unrest, trade agreements or educational and missionary activity (Berry, 1980). In such situations the migrating individuals are placed (be it on a forced or voluntary basis) in an unfamiliar cultural environment and will undergo a process of cultural adaptation to survive in the new culture. This process is known as acculturation and has become an increasingly prominent issue for business and marketing researchers, owing to an upsurge in migration and the growth of trans-national media (Luna and Gupta, 2001).

Early acculturation research focused on the theory of assimilation (Gordon, 1964). This approach assumed that when moving to an unfamiliar culture, the migrant would relinquish all links with their original culture and fully adopt the values of the new, dominant culture. This somewhat ethnocentric approach was relatively unchallenged until the 1960s when social scientists began to promote the idea of integration. This idea was developed into a conceptual framework by Berry (1980), who instead identified four different acculturation 'styles' that could be adopted by migrants:

- **Assimilation:** The traditional viewpoint whereby the immigrant effectively abandons their original culture in favour of the dominant culture;
- **Integration:** Or 'bi-culturalism', where both cultures are combined in the immigrants' everyday lives;

- **Separation:** Immigrants choose not to immerse themselves in the dominant culture and hold on strongly to their original cultural traits;
- **Marginalisation:** Possibly through failed integration, the immigrant becomes alienated and essentially loses links with both cultures.

Due to its acknowledgement that assimilation is not the only potential outcome of the acculturation process, this has remained the dominant acculturation framework and has since been utilised in studies of both permanent and temporary immigrants (Johnson, 2004).

The acculturation style adopted by immigrants can be dependent on a wide range of determinants, including generational status and education level (Parameswaran and Pisharadi, 2002; Rajagopalan and Hertmeyer, 2005), language ability and social interaction (Kara and Kara, 1996; Jamal and Chapman, 2000), and other situational factors such as host culture attitudes towards immigrants (Alvarez and Alvarez, 2004). Whilst integration is generally viewed as the most healthy form of acculturation (Ghaffarian, 2001), research conducted in a variety of countries has provided evidence of all four styles in existence.

The majority of empirical acculturation research has been conducted with permanent immigrants, meaning that less is known about the acculturation experiences of temporary migrants such as international students (Data-on, 2000). Such students may be torn between the national culture of the country in which they are studying and their original culture, which is

represented by family back home (Feldham and Rosenthal, 1990). These students may face problems surrounding language ability, homesickness, cultural difficulties, discrimination and a different educational system (e.g. Leung, 2001; Lay and Safdar, 2003). Given the large level of cultural distance between Asia and the Western world (particularly on the individualist-collectivist dimension [Hofstede, 1980], see Section 2.2.2), these problems can be amplified for East-Asian students who choose to study in the UK. Indeed, according to a 2004 UKCOSA survey concerns surrounding integration and homesickness remain the largest issues for international students even after spending a whole academic year in the UK (UKCOSA, 2004).

1.3.2 Consumer Complaint Behaviour

Historically, the majority of research into consumer behaviour has focused on events leading up to the sale of a product (customer acquisition). However, following on from the consumerist movement of the 1970s, researchers begin to consider issues relevant in customer retention. Central to keeping current customers satisfied is the effective handling of complaints made to the organisation, which led to increased research into the fields of consumer dissatisfaction and CCB. A widely accepted definition of CCB has been offered by Singh (1988):

a set of multiple (behavioural and non-behavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode

(Singh, 1988, p. 93)

Academics have been eager to emphasise that not all complaint behaviour manifests itself in formal complaints to organisations. Consumers instead use a wide variety of outlets to vent their dissatisfaction, including negative word of mouth amongst friends (Singh, 1988), using third parties or industry regulators as mediators (Boote, 1998) and increasingly the Internet (Gao, 2005). Much work in the CCB field has been centred on developing a comprehensive model of CCB which captures the variety of channels outlined above. For example, Crie (2003) developed a framework that included channels such as direct (or public) and third party complaints, as well as more invisible actions (those which are undertaken without the organisation in question being aware of them), such as boycotting or developing a negative attitude towards an organisation. Such 'indirect' complaint channels are especially important as research has shown that complaining direct to a company is not a common response to dissatisfaction, even for high value purchases (Hernandez and Fugate, 2004).

A number of variables have been identified that can determine which options a customer may choose to utilise when dissatisfied. For example, Singh and Pandya (1991) coined the 'threshold effect', which indicated that public complaints are more likely when feelings of dissatisfaction are

most intense. This finding was built upon by Broadbridge and Marshall (1995), who found that the financial and psychological risk involved in the purchase was particularly relevant. Another key determinant in the CCB process is national culture. Liu and McClure (2001) noted how collectivist cultures discourage sharing negative emotions in public, which can lead to a heightened use of word of mouth. In contrast, Western cultures often encourage uniqueness and self-expression, characteristics which are naturally more aligned with public complaining.

The majority of CCB research has been conducted in simple product categories (such as groceries), meaning less attention has been paid to more service-based offerings (including HE). Dolinsky (1994) has highlighted the importance of effective complaint handling for universities, but little is known about student attitudes towards complaining in an educational environment (Wright, Perkins, Alston, Heitzig, Meyer-Smith and Palmer, 1996). Dissatisfied students have a variety of outlets to consider when dissatisfied, including speaking to a Programme Leader, contacting the Students' Union or voicing their opinions through independent research such as the National Student Survey (Hart, 2007). Given the potential language and cultural barriers, the choice between such channels may be particularly complicated for East-Asian students. Therefore more needs to be understood on East-Asian complaint attitudes and behaviours to enable universities to handle dissatisfactory experiences effectively.

Throughout the thesis, the investigation of complaint behaviour will be done through a consumerist perspective, and this is reflected in the utilisation of research and frameworks largely from the fields of consumer behaviour, consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. However it is important at this point to also briefly consider the growing body of literature that has addressed the concept of complaint behaviour in the context of public sector management.

The use of terminology such as 'customer service', 'service recovery' and 'satisfaction', originally conceptualised in the context of a retailer - consumer relationship, has been increasingly applied to a wide range of public sector services, ranging from local authorities to the National Health Service. Such studies have often replaced the term 'customer' with 'stakeholder' to reflect the diversity of groups dependent on such services (McAdam, Hazlett and Casey, 2005). However, it has been argued that public servants, despite being aware of the importance of customer service, lack real knowledge of its implications for day to day issues such as handling complaints (Fountain, 2001). Indeed, McAdam, Hazlett and Casey (2005, p. 257) argue that: "the extent to which private sector remedies... can be simply transported into the public sector is a matter of much debate".

The five tenets of consumerism outlined by Potter (1988) amongst others (access, choice, information, redress and representation) have been criticised as lacking applicability to many public sector scenarios. For

example, a dated study by Seneviratne and Cracknell (1988) highlighted that despite recommendations from the Commission for Local Administration that all local authorities should establish individual complaint handling policies, the majority had failed to act and as such did not offer stakeholders sufficient means of venting dissatisfaction. However, because of numerous recent trends in HE provision in the UK, it would appear that the five principles of consumerism can be applied to an educational context.

- **Access:** Owing largely to Widening Participation policy, HE has now been positioned as an opportunity for all and not just those with the financial means to attend. In an international student context, many international bodies offer grants allowing students from across the world to study in the UK.
- **Choice:** There are over 140 HE institutions across the UK, and competition for students has been increased further by the recent growth of English speaking universities across Europe and Asia.
- **Information:** Reflecting the importance of choosing the right institution, universities have invested heavily in prospectuses, websites and other marketing materials that provide a detailed account of what their university has to offer. In addition, independent research such as the National Student Survey provides comparable data direct from final year students. Such diverse sources of information offer the prospective student much guidance throughout the application process.

- **Redress:** A key element in consumerism is the availability of channels to vent dissatisfaction with poor customer service (Potter, 1988). As will be discussed in Chapter Three, universities have now shown a greater willingness to listen to and act upon student feedback. The recently established Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) is a Government ran third party regulatory body that acts as a mediator in the event serious complaints.
- **Representation:** The National Union of Students is currently increasing efforts to ensure that the views of students are incorporated into university decision making. At Northumbria University, over 900 students represent their peers on course, school or even university wide committees, ensuring that students have a important role to play in the future of their university. Indeed, a recent periodic review of course provision at Northumbria University included a current student as a full member of the panel for the first time.

In addition, previous criticisms of the use of consumerist ideas in the public sector were often based on the criteria of price. Fountain (2001) argued that the boundaries of good customer service cannot be defined without price as a benchmark. However, recent changes to the financial structure of HE in the UK have allowed universities greater control over pricing structures than previously, a change that may be significant in how

students develop expectations. For the above reasons, it would appear suitable to utilise a consumerist viewpoint in the current study.

1.4 Outline of Research Questions and Objectives

After reviewing the acculturation and CCB literature, it was noted that previous literature has failed to bring together the two concepts and investigate if an acculturation style adopted by a migrant may impact upon the complaint behaviours utilised (Research Question 1). This knowledge would be of interest not only to universities but other organisations who serve migrant groups and want to build a clearer understanding of their complaint behaviours. From here, the literature survey outlined a number of other issues surrounding student acculturation and complaint behaviour in need of further investigation (which form Research Questions 2, 3 and 4). Table 1 outlines these questions, provides a brief rationale (discussed further in Section 3.10) and also signposts towards specific sections of the thesis where the research questions will be addressed.

Research Questions (RQ)	Justification/Importance	Method used to Investigate RQ	Data Analysis	Discussion/Recommendations
RQ1: Does a relationship exist between the acculturation style adopted by East-Asian students and their consumer complaint behaviour styles?	Whilst multiple studies have identified a relationship between culture and CCB, researchers have not yet assessed if acculturation is a crucial determinant for migrant groups. Previous studies into culture and CCB have skirted around the acculturation concept (Raven and Foxman, 1994).	Online Survey (Section 5.4)	Section 6.5	Sections 8.2/8.6
RQ2: What are the acculturation challenges experienced by East-Asian students whilst adapting to life in the UK?	Previous studies addressing international student acculturation have focused largely on academic issues, thus ignoring other potential barriers to integration. Existing studies are also dated and as such do not consider issues such as tuition fees and increased numbers of international students.	Semi-Structured Interviews (Section 5.5)	Section 7.3	Sections 8.3/8.6
RQ3: What are East-Asian students' experiences of complaining in different cultures?	A recent study by Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006) suggests that cross-national differences in complaint behaviours may be attributable to differences in shopping systems (e.g. returns policies) instead of culture. As East-Asian students have prolonged consumer experience in both East-Asia and the UK their experiences may provide further support for this viewpoint.	Semi-Structured Interviews (Section 5.5)	Section 7.4	Sections 8.4/8.6
RQ4: What are East-Asian students' attitudes towards complaining about the university should they become dissatisfied?	A largely untapped area, an understanding of East-Asian student attitudes towards complaining could aid universities in developing culturally-appropriate complaint mechanisms to ensure negative feedback is shared directly with university managers.	Semi-Structured Interviews (Section 5.5)	Section 7.5	Sections 8.5/8.6

Table 1: Research Questions and Outline Justification

A number of objectives were developed to ensure that the researcher followed a structured research process, from initial literature survey and research question generation through to analysis and discussion (outlined in Table 2). These objectives will be reviewed in Section 8.5 to ensure they have been satisfactorily achieved.

Objective	Relevant Chapter(s)
1: Conduct a thorough survey of the existing literature in the fields of acculturation and consumer complaint behaviour, with particular focus on how these concepts apply to international students in the HE sector	Chapters 2 and 3
2: Use the literature survey to develop research questions to form the basis for the current study	Chapter 3 (Section 3.10)
3: Develop a suitable methodology to collect data addressing the research questions	Chapters 4 and 5
4: Identify and utilise appropriate tools to analyse collected data	Chapter 5 (Sections 5.4.7 and 5.5.2) and Chapters 6 and 7
5: Use data analysis and existing studies to discuss the research questions and develop appropriate recommendations for UK universities	Chapter 8
6: Show an awareness of the limitations of the current study and identify areas for further research	Chapter 5 (Section 5.7) and Chapter 8 (Section 8.8)

Table 2: Study Objectives

1.5 Intended Contribution to Knowledge

The following section outlines the anticipated contribution to knowledge offered by this thesis. This will be reviewed after the data collection and analysis stages in Chapter Eight to assess if the anticipated contribution has been realised.

- This will be the first study to address the gap in the literature by bringing together the concepts of acculturation and CCB. Whereas previous studies have skirted around the subject (Raven and Foxman, 1994) or even deliberately selected a sample that excluded immigrants (with the intention of eliminating acculturation from the study: Huang, 1994), the current study will investigate if an association exists between acculturation styles and complaint behaviours within the East-Asian student population. A knowledge of the impact of acculturation on CCB will aid university managers in developing complaint mechanisms appropriate for all East-Asian students.
- Despite the obvious financial, academic and cultural benefits of attracting East-Asian students to the UK, the majority of acculturation research is conducted with permanent immigrants. Consequently, relatively little is known about the acculturation experiences of these students. Previous studies have focused on the challenges presented by the different educational systems, whilst the current study will also consider the wider cultural adaptation of East-Asian students to life in the UK.
- CCB researchers have traditionally focused their empirical research on simple product-based categories as opposed to complex service industries. Consequently CCB research has only been loosely extended to the HE sector, and no attention has been paid to East-Asian students who may wish to complain about their HE provision in the UK. This is surprising given the high involvement of the

university experience and the increasingly accepted viewpoint that students should be treated as customers (Webb and Jagun, 1997).

- In addition to the knowledge-based contribution, it is hoped that the current study will make a methodological contribution to the study of both acculturation and CCB. As will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three, both subject fields have been traditionally dominated by purely positivist methodologies (e.g. Nwankwo and Lindridge, 1998). This study will adopt a mixed methods approach, which is argued can lead to the discovery of new findings and dimensions (Jick, 1979). In addition, the current study will include the development of an instrument specifically designed to measure CCB in the HE sector, which will hopefully be suitable for use in future student complaint behaviour research.

1.6 Northumbria University: A Brief Overview

The target population for the current study is all East-Asian students enrolled on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at Northumbria University in the 2006/07 academic year. Northumbria University prides itself on a diverse student population; with over 2,300 students recruited from the East-Asia region (Northumbria Facts and Figures, 2008) it provides an ideal site for the current study. Indeed, Northumbria University was the ninth largest international student recruiter in 2007, a statistic which led to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) voicing concerns that such a large intake could compromise standards (www.independent.co.uk, 2008). At this point it is important to briefly outline the history and

characteristics of the university, with particular emphasis on procedures in place to serve the international student body.

Northumbria University is a large HE institution first established as a polytechnic in 1969, and officially recognised as a university in September 1992. Based across two campuses in the centre of Newcastle upon Tyne, the University has undergone substantial growth in recent years; student numbers have increased from 21,000 in 2001 to 31,000 in 2008 (www.northumbria.ac.uk), a figure which includes 3,000 students in franchise institutions and a further 2,000 on distance learning programmes. Approximately 3,000 staff are employed within the university, with over 900 academic staff involved in actual teaching delivery.

The university is divided into nine academic schools, the largest of which being Health, Community and Education (7,000 students), Arts and Social Sciences (4,200) and Newcastle Business School (3,700). The University now boasts a turnover of over £180m, a figure which is largely achieved through attracting an international student population of over 7,000 (Northumbria Facts and Figures, 2008).

In terms of peer recognition, the University historically received very positive feedback from the QAA - large numbers of courses received scores of at least 22/24, statistics which were widely used in student recruitment activities. However as Government attention drifted from the QAA assessments, university efforts moved towards the *Times Good*

University Guide Rankings, the Research Assessment Exercise and more recently the National Student Survey as a means of promoting the university. Northumbria University has been ranked 73rd in the upcoming 2009 *Good University Guide* (Times Online, 2008), with a staff to student ratio of 22:1, notably higher than similarly positioned universities. This ratio may be linked to results from the latest National Survey, where despite scoring an overall satisfaction level of 78% the university was largely criticised for issues surrounding assessment and feedback (www.unistats.com, 2008).

Numerous procedures are in place to accommodate the needs of international students. All admissions queries and applications are handled by the International Office, and the university welcomes students every semester with a Meet and Greet service, which involves meeting students at the local airport, bringing them to the university and delivering a tailored induction programme. This scheme and subsequent support is offered by a team of dedicated International Student Advisors who are based centrally rather than being attached to particular academic schools. The advisors are in place to handle any queries international students may have throughout their sojourn, and assist approximately 3,000 students per academic year. The service provides support on a variety of issues, including course problems, immigration, personal problems and disputes with external organisations. In addition, the university runs an optional English language course prior to each academic year, which is open to all international students who have concerns over their language ability.

It is clear from the above initiatives that the international student body is of high importance to university management, and it is hoped that the findings of the current study will provide further insights that can help improve the experiences of the East-Asian student cohort.

1.7 Outline of Thesis

The following section will provide a brief review of the remainder of the thesis, directing towards particular sections within chapters where appropriate.

Chapter Two will provide a detailed discussion of both historical and recent acculturation theory. The key reasons for cross-cultural interaction will be outlined and a range of potential models of acculturation will be considered. The chapter will also outline previous studies that have linked acculturation to other areas of marketing and consumer behaviour, and also specifically consider literature on the acculturation experiences of international students.

Chapter Three will introduce the concepts of consumer dissatisfaction and CCB, and consider the chronological development of CCB theory. The discussion will also address the various triggers that cause consumers to react to dissatisfactory incidents in specific ways, summarise the literature

on complaint handling from the company perspective and also consider student satisfaction and dissatisfaction, specifically in the HE sector.

Building on the literature review and development of research questions in Section 3.10, Chapters Four and Five will discuss the methodological decisions and procedures used in data collection and analysis. **Chapter Four** will focus upon the importance of selecting an appropriate theoretical perspective before introducing pragmatism as the philosophy guiding the current study. The two-stage, mixed method approach used to address the research questions is also introduced and justified. From this point, **Chapter Five** will provide a rationale for the data collection processes utilised in the current study, firstly by outlining the exploratory focus group and then the subsequent development of the online survey and semi-structured interviews. The chapter will close by addressing ethical issues and the limitations of the proposed methodology.

Chapter Six will provide an analysis of the quantitative data from the online survey. The two instruments included in the survey (East Asian Acculturation Measure [EAAM] and the Student Complaint Behaviours Survey [SCBS]) will be analysed in turn alongside relevant demographic variables, before the two data sets are analysed together to address Research Question 1. **Chapter Seven** will provide an analysis of the subsequent semi-structured interviews used to address Research Questions 2, 3 and 4. This discussion will be based around three key themes that were identified through the data collection and analysis

process (student acculturation, complaining in an unfamiliar culture and student complaint behaviour).

Chapter Eight will use the findings from previous chapters to specifically address the four research questions, discussing the findings alongside the literature identified in Chapters Two and Three (Sections 8.2 to 8.5). The conclusions will be used to make practical recommendations for universities with East-Asian student cohorts. The Chapter will also review the original contribution to knowledge offered throughout the thesis, consider limitations of the study and highlight potential areas for future research.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter has presented the concepts of acculturation and CCB and outlined their particular importance to the UK HE sector, which has become increasingly dependent on the revenues from international students. From here, the four research questions that guide the current study were introduced (and are discussed in further detail in Section 3.10). The chapter also identified the intended contribution to knowledge, provided an overview of Northumbria University as the site for the current study and offered an outline of the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Two: Acculturation

2.1 Overview of Chapter

Chapters Two and Three will provide a review of the literature for the concepts of acculturation and CCB (Study Objective 1). This chapter will initially introduce and define acculturation, highlighting the numerous terms that have previously been used to describe the process of cultural adaptation. A number of competing models of acculturation will be discussed (most notably the uni-dimensional and bi-dimensional approaches), as well as a summary of variables that can impact upon the acculturation process. The chapter will also include a section on how previous marketing studies have used acculturation to explain various aspects of consumer behaviour, and will close with a specific discussion on the acculturation of international students, who need to negotiate both an unfamiliar culture and an educational system that varies greatly from that in their respective home countries.

2.2 Introduction to Acculturation

The concept of culture was effectively preceded by terms such as 'national character' (Clark, 1990) and 'stereotypes'. Whilst a perusal of the literature uncovers an extensive number of definitions of the concept, culture has been succinctly defined as:

The collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values

(Hofstede, 2001, p. 1)

Some of the most influential work on understanding national and organisational culture has been produced by academics such as Edward Hall (1976) and Geert Hofstede (1980), both of whom developed a number of dimensions which could be used to identify cultural differences based on issues such as communication, confrontation and masculine/feminine roles. In particular the work of Hofstede has been widely acclaimed for its contribution to academic understanding and has been utilised in much subsequent research.

In one of Hofstede's most recent editions of his book *Culture's Consequences* (2001), he commented that although cultures are extremely stable in general, they are also susceptible to a variety of external forces, including nature, people from other cultures, trade, conquest, economic and political changes and technology. Consequently, it can be argued that research assuming that culture is a static phenomenon can be criticised for being overly simplistic (Franco, 1983; Steenkamp, 2001) and as a result more needs to be learned about the concept of acculturation. Palumbo and Teich (2004) more recently posited that a large influx of immigrants can lead to a blurring of any one country's cultural profile.

Steenkamp (2001) has argued that the growth in both temporary (study, tourism) and permanent (immigration) migration means that understanding national culture is harder than ever. Indeed, Gentry, Jun and Tansuhaj (1995) had earlier argued that cultural confrontations are “clearly on the rise” (p. 129). Similarly, Luna and Gupta (2001) believed that changing migration patterns and trans-national media had led to the growth of multi-cultural populations in domestic markets (e.g. Jamal and Chapman [2000] point out that London may soon become the most ethnically diverse capital in the world).

Berry (1980), one of the foremost writers on the subject, highlighted a number of potential ‘triggers’ of the acculturation process, which ranged from peaceful cultural exchanges such as trade agreements, educational/missionary activity and telecommunications through to more hostile situations such as political unrest, invasion or even enslavement. In the majority of such cross-cultural interactions one group will normally dominate another (i.e. the host culture will typically have control over the behaviour of immigrants), meaning that the acculturation process may often be a difficult one for many individuals. This is further heightened when the cultural contact is not voluntary in nature (Kim, 1979).

Holland and Gentry (1999) provide a useful summary of ethnic studies in the marketing field (Table 3). As would be expected, a sustained interest in various ethnic groups was only stimulated by a growing realisation that these were potentially profitable segments of the population. In addition,

Burton (2000) reported that some ethnic groups were until recently deemed as an 'underclass' which discouraged researchers from investigating them further. The earliest studies sought merely to show how ethnic groups differ from one another, and often did so using somewhat questionable techniques (e.g. many studies segmented groups purely based upon surname: Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk, 2001). However, more recent work has involved a wider array of ethnic groups and attempted to explain why such differences exist. It could now be argued that owing to ever-increasing immigration levels (approximately 600,000 people moved to the UK in 2006 – National Statistics Online, 2007), acculturation is the single-most germane issue for researchers of ethnic groups:

Recently, the concept of acculturation has been asserted to be the cornerstone of immigration research.... It is part of the ongoing process of socialisation, but is particularly relevant to newcomers in a society

(Rissel, 1997, p. 607)

Level	Date	Characteristics
1	Prior to 1960s	- Ethnic groups were largely ignored as they were not considered to be potentially profitable target segments
2	Mid 1960s – 1980s	- Studies designed to identify (but not understand) differences in behaviour across ethnic groups (most commonly basic comparisons of whites and African-Americans)
3	1980s to date	- Various ethnic groups are addressed, with the focus no longer restricted to identifying differences between groups

Table 3: Levels of Ethnic Research (Holland and Gentry, 1999, p. 68)

Rajagopalan and Hertmeyer (2005) noted that the concept of acculturation was first cited by Robert E. Park in 1928, however prior to this politicians were keen to gain a greater understanding of the impact of immigration. In the early 1900s the US Immigration Commission reacted to public fears that immigrants were a threat to US culture by declaring assimilation 'essential', ensuring that all immigrants conform to the values and behaviours of US culture (explained further in Section 2.3.1 - Ogden, Schau and Ogden, 2004). Such policies illustrate that acculturation has been a pertinent issue in society for hundreds of years:

Contact between cultures is a centuries old phenomenon, as is the observation of change in the behaviour of members of one cultural group toward the standard of the other cultural group

(Padilla, 1980, p. 47)

As well as posing obvious challenges for society as a whole, the growth in immigration has direct implications for both marketing scholars and practitioners alike: it has been suggested that organisations now need to consider 'marketer acculturation' – the process of adapting to the needs of new cultural market segments, rather than consumers adapting to an organisation's product offering (Penaloza and Gilly, 1995). Equally, the recent growth of ethnic marketing in the UK has led Burton (2005) to recommend the inclusion of acculturation as an important subject area in modern marketing degrees.

2.2.1 Defining Acculturation

Despite the concept being coined almost 80 years ago in the US, academics have failed to agree upon an accepted definition of acculturation to be utilised in future research. Indeed, it is a topic that has caused widespread discussion and debate amongst psychology, anthropology and more recently business academics. This is complicated further by the wide variety of terms that have been employed in acculturation research, many of which overlap in their meaning and have hampered overall progress in the field:

A lack of theoretical integration of key aspects of the immigrant adaptation process is manifested in the diversity of constructs on which past studies have focused (e.g. assimilation, acculturation and ethnic affiliation). While intimately related, these concepts suggest different aspects of changing ethnicity after immigration

(Kim, Larocche and Tomiuk, 2001, p. 608)

Previously, Kagan and Cohen (1990) had also observed that terms such as acculturation and assimilation are often used interchangeably in the literature. In reality what is required is a comprehensive review of the terminology in the field and guidelines for using such concepts correctly in future research. As early as 1978, Olmedo and Padilla noted that the lack of an agreed definition was hampering attempts to operationalise acculturation, thus limiting the usefulness of the concept to practitioners. Unfortunately in the 30 years since this comment was made the field

seems to have become further cluttered with new concepts and contradictory definitions.

The earliest attempts at defining acculturation were offered when concern over the impact of immigrants was gaining momentum in the US. Writing in the American Anthropologist, Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) described acculturation as:

Those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups

(Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, 1936, p. 149)

It is interesting to note that such an early attempt to explain acculturation acknowledged that the influence may be bi-directional in nature (i.e. even a small number of immigrants can cause some minor changes to the dominant culture, as opposed to the influence being entirely one-way). This definition was built upon by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), who in 1954 pointed out that although acculturation should be viewed as a two-way process, in reality it is often one cultural group that dominates another:

This imbalance often leads to a view that acculturation is really the process of one culture dominating another; despite this observed imbalance the concept still refers to a two-way flow

(Social Science Research Council, 1954, p. 974)

Despite featuring frequently in acculturation studies to date, neither the definitions of Redfield, Linton and Herskovits or the SSRC have been taken as comprehensive explanations of the concept. Surprisingly, over the past three decades a number of authors have instead offered their own definitions of acculturation that seem to largely ignore the idea that acculturation can be a two-way process. Instead, the majority of writers viewed it as a process whereby an immigrant inevitably adopts the values and behaviours of the dominant host culture and relinquishes attachments with their original culture (see Table 4 for a selection of examples). Such a viewpoint is also known as assimilation and will be addressed in more detail in Section 2.3.1. It is clear from the selection of definitions below that some confusion exists between the concepts of assimilation and acculturation. Essentially the difference between the two can be summarised as follows:

While assimilation occurs when an immigrant fully adopts mainstream values and gives up his/her cultural heritage, acculturation can occur when some elements of the mainstream culture are added without abandoning the native culture

(Ogden, Schau and Ogden, 2004, p. 3)

Authors	Date	Acculturation Definition
Kim	1979	"The immigrant becomes acquainted with, and adopts some of the norms and values of salient reference groups of the new society" (p. 436)
Padilla, Wagatsuma and Lindholm	1985	"The degree to which the ethnic group has adopted the dominant culture" (p. 298)
O'Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber	1986	"Whenever immigrants remain in a new country, sooner or later they begin to understand and adopt at least some of the norms, values and behaviours of the host culture, and some of the initial differences begin to blur" (p. 113)
Khairullah	1998	"A process in which ethnic consumers move along a theoretic continuum from low acculturation, where they maintain the cultural values of their ethnic origin, to the other extreme, high acculturation, where they have adopted the cultural values of the dominant culture" (p. 56)
Laroche, Kim and Tomiuk	1998	"Is generally taken to indicate acquisition of host culture traits" (p. 129)
Seitz	1998	"The process of acquiring the customs of an alternative society" (p. 23)
Ghaffarian	2001	"The process through which an individual adapts to a culture different from the one in which he or she was born and raised" (p. 565)
Johnson	2004	"Is absorption of the host society's cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour patterns by immigrants or by other groups historically excluded from the larger group" (p. 1280)

Table 4: Uni-dimensional Definitions of Acculturation (Various)

Some authors have however resisted the temptation to refer to acculturation as simply assimilation, and have instead offered less assumptive definitions that do not directly imply domination of one culture over another. For example, Lee and Um (1992) see it as "essentially a process of cultural change" (p. 429), whilst Suinn, Ahuna and Khoo (1992) see it as "a process that can occur when two or more cultures interact together" (p. 1041). Certainly these definitions appear to be more appropriate to the concept of student acculturation, as sojourners would not be expected to fully relinquish their original cultural traits.

As well as assimilation, a number of other related concepts have been used alongside acculturation to explain cultural adaptation; a selection of the most common terms are briefly addressed below.

- **Ethnic Identity:** This refers not to an individual's country of birth, but instead to an individual's subjective view of which ethnicity they identify most closely with (Ogden, Schau and Ogden, 2004). It can also be defined as the attitudes held toward a particular ethnic group and a sense of belonging towards it (Johnson, 2004). However, Laroche, Kim and Tomiuk (1998) felt that this concept should be operationalised using items based on language, friendship networks, religious affiliation and food preferences – all issues which are relevant to the measurement of acculturation (see Section 2.4). Therefore it could be argued that the two concepts are essentially measuring the same issues and thus the use of multiple terms unnecessarily complicates the field: “the term ethnic identity has sometimes been used synonymously with acculturation” (Phinney, 1990, p. 501).
- **Cultural Interpenetration:** Andreasen (1990) coined this term to describe the exposure of one culture to another, through direct contact or the media. The same author felt that this was a critical research issue for the 1990s, however it is unclear how this differs from acculturation.

- **Consumer Acculturation:** Whereas acculturation refers to the general process of acclimatising to life in an alternative society, consumer acculturation focuses on those behaviours relevant to being a consumer in an unfamiliar culture (Penaloza 1989; Maldonado and Tansuhaj 2002). This term was introduced to the field as business researchers became aware that acculturation could be used as a segmentation variable for ethnic groups (Palumbo and Teich, 2004 – see Section 2.6). However a review of articles that have attempted to operationalise consumer acculturation again shows that similar issues are included in measurement scales (language, food preferences etc.), suggesting that whilst understanding the consumer environment is a significant challenge in itself, it is perhaps best viewed as part of the overall acculturation process.

From the above examples, it would appear that many of the terms used in the literature are addressing the same issues as acculturation, and are even operationalised in a very similar way. It is this confusion that has limited the theoretical progress made in recent years. Indeed, Laroche, Kim and Tomiuk (1998) claimed that the persistent use of the dated assimilation model (see Section 2.3.1) is largely down to a lack of clarity in definitions. As will be described further, modern thinking on acculturation views assimilation as only one potential outcome of cross-cultural contact, and it is this bi-dimensional viewpoint (Section 2.3.2) that guides the current study.

2.2.2 Introduction to East-Asian Cultural Values

As this study is focusing on students of East-Asian origin, it is useful to summarise briefly some of the cultural values that guide Asians' behaviour. As Yau (1988) noted, many elements of Asian culture are directly linked to Confucian philosophy first developed close to 2,500 years ago. Despite the fluctuating level of influence of Confucianism during some dynasties, it is still seen to be "inextricably linked" to Asian culture (Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk, 2004, p. 10).

Table 5 provides a summary of what are seen as the central cultural values held by East-Asians, and shows a high level of consistency across authors. Implicit throughout is the importance of family and other close in-groups; older generations are to be respected and family members interdependent. The needs of those immediately around an individual are of utmost importance, with modesty and continuity encouraged. As Yau (1988) has suggested, the family functions by protecting individuals from external influence and promotes consistency and loyalty at all times. Such is the strength of these values that should members of a Chinese family move to another culture for a significant period of time, they tend to be assimilated back into Asian culture upon their return.

Authors	Date	East-Asian Cultural Values
Yau	1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Man-to-nature orientation: Man is part of nature and should not try to overcome it - Man-to-himself orientation: Families teach modesty and self-effacement. Correct actions are dictated by the situation so some compromise is inevitable - Respect for Authority: More structural and hierarchical systems than in Western countries. Interdependence is also important and favours are seen as social investments - Time orientation: Are past-minded and believe in living up to the expectations of parents or ancestors. Also believe in continuity - Personal Activity: High moral self-control and regulation. Feelings are not suppressed, but regulated
Feldham and Rosenthal	1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on filial piety (love and responsibility towards family); needs of the family are placed above the individual - Interdependence of family members - Conformity to set rules and behavioural expectations - Expression of individual needs is considered selfish - Expected to accept authority figures, especially within the family
Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk	2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strict observance of hierarchical relationships in society - Generation and gender dictate hierarchy in families - Clearly differentiated gender roles which are difficult for individuals to change

Table 5: East-Asian Cultural Values (Various)

From the above summary, it is clear that the cultural values that guide Asians differ significantly from those in Western society (for example, individuals from the US and UK are typically more likely to place their individual needs above that of their families). Feldham and Rosenthal (1990) noted that as acculturation is concerned with cultural change:

Acculturation can only occur when the culture of origin and the new host culture differ markedly in terms of values, attitudes or behaviours

(Feldham and Rosenthal, 1990, p. 260)

Interestingly, the move towards globalisation has been noted by academics as having some impact on how Asian populations live their lives:

In recent years, Western thought and ideology have played an important part in the cultural changes of many Chinese societies, especially in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore

(Yau, 1988, p. 56)

Such a viewpoint suggests that acculturation can occur without the continuous first-hand contact that was originally suggested by Redfield, Linton and Herschovits (1936); instead merely the transfer of business philosophies via the media or second-hand partnerships can significantly affect the culture of a nation. Due to population growth in countries such as China, Kim, Heiby, Brislin and Griffin (2002) believed that the need to investigate the acculturation of South East-Asians is particularly pronounced.

2.3 Models of Acculturation

When confronted with an alternative culture, individuals and groups are faced with a decision of how to react to their new lives: do they choose to adapt to none/some/all of the values and behaviours of their 'new' culture, or retain their existing cultural beliefs despite potential prejudice? Novas, Garcia, Sanchez, Rojas, Pumares and Fernandez (2005) highlighted that

there are numerous 'layers' of culture, some of which would be easier for an individual to change than others:

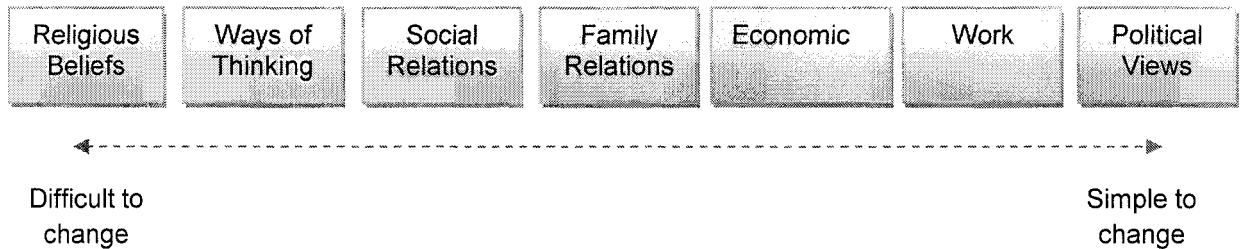


Figure 1: Layers of Culture (Adapted from Novas et al., 2005)

The majority of theoretical thinking on acculturation focuses on outcomes (i.e. how an individual ultimately behaves as a result of acculturation). This is the main focus of this section, however first it is worth acknowledging the existing frameworks that treat acculturation as an overall process. For example, Oberg (1960) outlined four stages of immigrant acculturation, suggesting that ultimately they would assimilate to the dominant culture:

- **Honeymoon:** Fascination, superficial contact with no conflict evident;
- **Rejection:** Hostile and aggressive attitudes to the new culture;
- **Tolerance:** Acquisition of cultural skills and knowledge, increased contact and reduced conflict;
- **Integration:** Confidence in new culture which replaces their original culture as “another way of life”.

Although this process is useful as it acknowledges that the immigrant will go through a number of phases that may be stressful or uncomfortable, the later stages do imply a somewhat assimilationist viewpoint of acquiring the values of the host culture. A more up-to-date procedural model of acculturation has been offered by Maldonado and Tansuhaj (2002) which distinguishes between pre-immigration, transition and outcomes: they identified that the transition stage was a good opportunity for marketers to gain immigrants' trust by supporting them through the acculturation process.

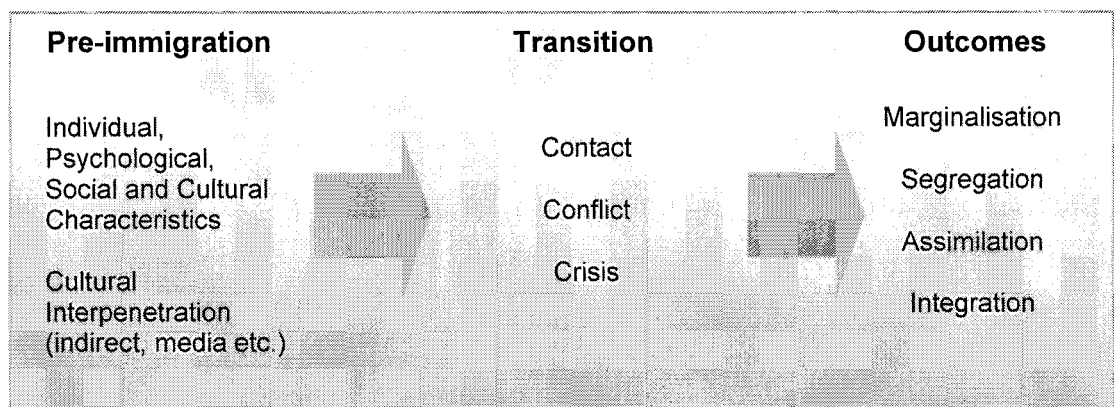


Figure 2: Acculturation Process (Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2002, p. 135)

The above model is surprisingly one of the only attempts at presenting acculturation in a procedural manner – as will be illustrated the majority of models have focused on the 'outcomes' element of this model (Sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.3), as it is the eventual outcome of the acculturation process that will guide the majority of immigrants' future behaviour.

2.3.1 Uni-Dimensional Models of Acculturation

Historically, many developed nations were wary of the impact immigrants may have on their national heritage (Ogden, Schau and Ogden, 2004). This led many Governments to promote what can be viewed as a somewhat ethnocentric approach, forcing immigrants to relinquish the core elements of their original culture and instead adopt the values of the host culture. This is based on the underlying assumption that “strengthening of one’s ethnic identity requires the weakening of another” (Quester and Chong, 2001, p. 204). This was historically known as assimilation theory and was later termed the ‘melting pot’ model, and is generally recognised as a hallmark of early 1900s US Government (Penaloza, 1994).

Milton Gordon (1964) was amongst the first authors to summarise this approach diagrammatically (see Figure 3). By assimilating to the dominant culture, the immigrant is essentially not contributing to the national character of that country (Sommerlad and Berry, 1970) and will have to change their behaviour significantly. In contrast, members of the dominant culture are not influenced by immigrants and may still choose to ignore or even oppose their membership of society.

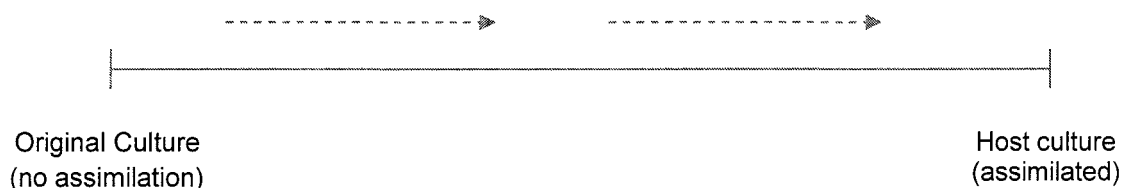


Figure 3: Uni-Dimensional/Acculturation Model (adapted from Gordon, 1964)

In methodological terms, this simplistic approach allows researchers to assess individuals with a single 'assimilation' score and thus classify them as either high or low acculturation (Alvarez and Alvarez, 2004; Ogden, Schau and Ogden, 2004). In a study considering the consumer behaviour of Hispanic immigrants in the US, Kara and Kara (1996) utilised such a crude split, defining those with high assimilation scores as "the consumer that exhibits greater progression toward the attitudes and values of the host society" (p. 221). It has been previously suggested that many immigrants are consciously aware of the assimilation process and regard it as the only means of being accepted into society: Melikian and De Karapetian (1997) found that Armenians who had immigrated to Lebanon still referred to themselves as 'Lebanese of Armenian descent', despite significantly changing their behaviours to fit in with their new environment.

Alvarez and Alvarez (2004) highlighted that those individuals who attempted to combine cultures were not accepted by wider society and instead classified as being marginal. According to the assimilationist perspective, this attempt at 'bi-culturalism' is only a temporary state on the road to assimilation (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault and Senecal, 1997). Pons, Laroche, Nyeck and Perreault (2001) referred to such bi-cultural individuals as the '150% man'; someone who simultaneously holds two sets of cultural traits and varies his behaviour according to the specific situation (e.g. work, family life etc.).

Throughout this period of adaptation, immigrants are regarded as being at the bottom of the social hierarchy, are fully expected to assimilate successfully but are given very limited support in this process:

problems of adaptation experienced by the immigrants are attributed to the immigrants themselves, who are held responsible for their failure or success in assimilating to the host society

(Glazer and Moynihan, 1970, p. 376)

The assimilationist approach has been criticised for oversimplifying the acculturation process. Flannery, Reise and Yu (2001) instead suggested that assimilation is best understood as a multi-layered process:

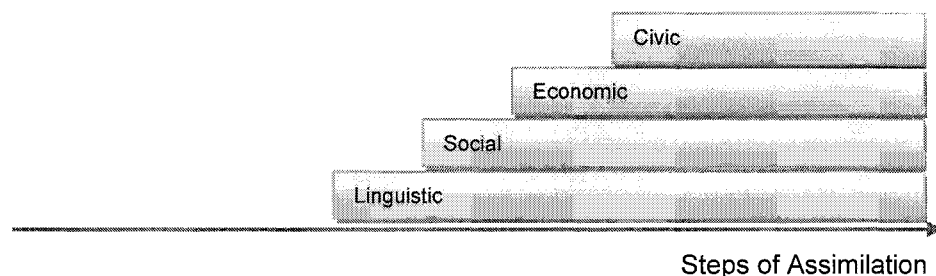


Figure 4: Complex Uni-Dimensional Model (Flannery, Reise and Yu, 2001, p. 1036)

Johnson (2004) felt that this was a notable improvement on initial views of assimilation as it acknowledged that certain elements of a host culture may take longer to adopt (as also suggested by Novas et al., 2005). However despite its added complexity, all uni-dimensional models focus only on the extent to which host culture values have been adopted (Johnson, 2004).

A potential outcome of the assimilationist approach is what has been coined as 'overshooting' (Triandis, Kashima, Shimado and Villareal, 1986). Possibly motivated by pressure from the host society (Lee and Tse, 1994), immigrants adopt extreme behaviours to try and appear part of the dominant culture (Korgankaar, Karson and Lund, 2000). Such extreme behaviours are likely to be overt in nature (e.g. wearing particular clothing) as the immigrant attempts to communicate their assimilation (Triandis et al., 1986). This outcome is thought to be most common amongst second generation immigrants who are heavily influenced through peer pressure (Lee and Tse, 1994) and is less likely to occur in a university environment where international students often form close friendships with co-nationals (Bochner, McLeod and Lin, 1977).

Given the ethnocentric nature of the uni-dimensional models discussed, it is unsurprising that they have been widely criticised. As Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk (2004) suggested, this may have been an appropriate means of understanding acculturation in the past, but in modern times immigrant cultures are surviving as part of dominant cultures, so more up to date theoretical thinking is required.

O'Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber (1986) criticised the model for assuming that the only ultimate outcomes of the process are 'zero' or 'full' assimilation, indicating that in reality many immigrants may fall between such extremes. Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk (2001) claimed that assimilation was a relatively rare outcome, and consequently such models fail to capture the actual

acculturation patterns of many immigrants. In 2004, the same authors concluded that the uni-dimensional model incorrectly “assumes and imposes a perfectly inverse relationship between participation in an ethnic culture and involvement in a host culture” (Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk, 2004, p. 7). As Maldonado and Tansuhaj (2002) summarised:

Acculturation recognises that changes take place over time but that one may not necessarily become more like the new culture

(Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2002, p. 414)

In addition, the uni-dimensional approach has come under criticism for various other reasons:

- Such a model does not account for what O’Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber (1986) call ‘situational ethnicity’, suggesting that immigrants may adapt their behaviour to suit specific circumstances such as work, shopping and religious or social occasions.
- Gilly (1995) questioned the assumption that immigrants will always aspire to be a part of the new culture. This may not be the case, particularly if the move to an unfamiliar culture was non-voluntary.
- Burton (2000) suggested that if assimilation was the only outcome of acculturation then ethnicity would essentially become a redundant issue as the population would become culturally homogeneous.

It is these criticisms that have led some academics to label the uni-dimensional approach as nothing more than “traditional acculturation theory” (Lee and Um, 1992, p. 429). They argued that given the current trend towards cultural pluralism in many countries such a model was no longer a valid representation of immigrant adaptation.

Despite most academics suggesting that this approach is outdated, Alvarez and Alvarez (2004) noted that uni-dimensional measurement scales are still largely utilised in the literature, presumably owing to their simplicity. It has been suggested that a uni-dimensional framework may be most applicable in mono-cultural societies, whereas alternative theory was required to explain cultural adaptation in bi-cultural societies (Szapocznik and Kurtines, 1980).

2.3.2 Bi-Dimensional Model of Acculturation

The uni-dimensional approach had remained relatively unchallenged until the 1960s, when social scientists began to refer to bi-culturalism as a genuine social policy (Alvarez and Alvarez, 2004). Consequently, Canadian psychologist John Berry (1980) developed an alternative framework based on the concept of adaptation. In doing this, he outlined two dichotomous questions that could be used to place immigrants into categories:

- Is my cultural identity of value to be retained?
- Are positive relations with the larger (dominant) society to be sought?

These two questions led to the development of a typology designed to understand the differing acculturation styles available to immigrants (Padilla [1980] noted that behavioural psychologists often attempt to categorise individuals using such matrices). Whilst the uni-dimensional model was referred to as the 'melting pot' model, Berry's framework was alternatively coined as either the 'tossed salad' or 'cultural mosaic' approach (Herche and Balasubramanian, 1994), reflecting the greater level of choice offered to immigrants. The four acculturation styles in Table 6 are described in further detail below:

Varieties of Acculturation	Retention of Cultural Identity?	Positive Relationship to Dominant Society?
Assimilation	No	Yes
Integration	Yes	Yes
Separation/Rejection	Yes	No
Marginalisation/Deculturation	No	No

Table 6: Dichotomous answers to question of acculturation (Berry, 1980, p. 14)

- **Assimilation:** This acculturation style reflects the outcome that is assumed inevitable in the assimilationist approach: immigrants relinquish the values and behaviours of their original culture in an attempt to be accepted into the host culture. This was the approach

advocated by the US Government in the early 1900s and reflected common ethnocentric thinking of that time.

- **Integration:** This refers to those individuals who seek relationships and commonalities with members of both their original culture and those of the new, dominant society. In the assimilationist model, this was deemed to be nothing more than a temporary phase, but Berry's (1980) framework instead purports that this is a feasible long-term outcome of acculturation in its own right. Indeed, it has been suggested that this approach "results in healthier adjustment in immigrants, compared with complete assimilation" (Ghaffarian, 2001, p. 566). Further to this, Bourhis et al. (1997) also found that integration was associated with lower levels of acculturative stress.
- **Separation:** Here, the immigrant chooses not to immerse themselves in the dominant culture and instead retain full adherence to the norms, values and behaviours of their home culture. Whereas such an approach would have been met with widespread derision and even racial prejudice under the assimilation model, immigrants are no longer forced to engage in host culture behaviours. Those who follow such an acculturation style are likely to join and be active in particular ethnic or religious groups (Moghaddam, Taylor and Lolande, 1987).
- **Marginalisation:** An immigrant is described as marginal if they have failed to integrate with the host culture and have not retained links with their home culture. This is often the result of culture shock, discrimination or social isolation and is generally regarded

as the least healthy acculturation style. In many cases, marginalisation is the result of a failed initial attempt to integrate or assimilate, which can damage an immigrant's confidence (Alvarez and Alvarez, 2004).

On a methodological level, this alternative framework suggests that acculturation can no longer be assessed via a single score approach but instead by a composite profile (Sodowsky, Lai and Plake, 1991). This will be discussed further in Section 2.7. This model is considered to be more in line with recent Government policy in countries such as Canada, whereby immigrants are now encouraged to maintain their cultural links whilst simultaneously building bonds with the host culture:

A major tenet of this school of thought holds that a variety of cultures can co-exist in the same geographical area and maintain a part or the whole of their ethnic background while functioning within a host society

(Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk, 2001, p. 609)

Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk (2004) felt that the bi-dimensional model acknowledges ethnic diversity and can “more freely account for the immigrant adaptation process” (p. 9). Palumbo and Teich (2004) similarly concluded that the bi-dimensional approach was more empirically useful than its predecessor, and has become increasingly popular over the last two decades (Johnson, 2004).

This model has been praised by academics who were frustrated with the dated assimilationist approach: Ward and Kennedy (1994) used the model to investigate immigrants in New Zealand and referred to the work of John Berry and colleagues as 'outstanding'. Similarly, Novas, et al. commented that the model has had "an enormous influence on theory and research" (2005, p. 28) in North America and Europe.

Despite widespread acclaim for recognising acculturation as a more complex process than previously acknowledged, academics have highlighted some potential flaws in the bi-dimensional model. For example, the framework has been criticised for assuming that immigrants have the choice of how to acculturate, when in reality this may be dictated by the dominant society (Burton, 1996; Alvarez and Alvarez, 2004). This argument appears more applicable to an ethnocentric environment, rather than a university where ethnic diversity is actively promoted. Keel and Drew (2004) investigated the acculturation of Yugoslavian immigrants in Australia, and criticised the model as it did not consider what happens if the immigrants fail to integrate, possibly owing to language barriers. However, this is something of a flawed argument as the model does offer the outcomes of separation and marginalisation, either of which may be feasibly adopted should an immigrant fail to integrate.

Greenland and Brown (2005) have suggested the model simply provides a cross-section at a given point, rather than considering how acculturation may change over time. However given that most students are only in the

UK for a maximum of two to three years this criticism seems more relevant when applying the model to permanent immigrants. On a more methodological level, Sodowsky and Plake (1992) utilised the bi-dimensional approach but chose to eliminate the marginalisation outcome; they felt that it was difficult to define someone as being 'without culture' and due to their withdrawn nature they would be difficult to include in empirical research. Although it seems logical that marginalised individuals would be harder to recruit, studies elsewhere have been able to recruit marginalised individuals (e.g. Kotic, 2002) so this was not deemed to be a significant issue.

Despite the above limitations, the bi-dimensional acculturation model is to be utilised in the current study. Palumbo and Teich (2004) noted that the model was particularly suited to adolescents and students, who often seek higher levels of social integration than their older relatives:

They hold fast to their language, customs, and culture, yet are willing participants in Europe's or America's dream

(Palumbo and Teich, 2004, p. 489)

Further to this, Chen, Aung, Zhou and Kanetkar (2005) investigated Asian immigrants in Canada and concluded that the assimilationist model was not appropriate because of Canada's multicultural society. Instead they felt that the "the separation and integration modes of acculturation could be better models to examine immigrant consumers in Canada" (p. 229).

Given that the UK and particularly international universities such as

Northumbria have a similarly open approach to ethnic diversity, it would be illogical to adopt the uni-dimensional model. Despite being originally developed to describe the acculturation experiences of permanent immigrants the bi-dimensional model has also been used with temporary work sojourners (Ward and Kennedy, 1994) and the international student population (Zheng, Sang and Wang, 2004: see Section 2.7). As a result acculturation scales based on this model have been developed specifically for international student populations (e.g. Barry, 2001).

2.3.3 Other Models of Acculturation

Whilst the bi-dimensional model is regarded as being representative of modern thinking on acculturation, academics have recently developed more complex models, most of which are largely based on Berry's (1980) work. For example, Flannery, Reise and Yu (2001) noted that there was a lack of comparison between uni and bi-dimensional models, and subsequently compared the models by administering two acculturation scales (based on the two competing frameworks) to a sample of respondents. They felt that neither model 'wins' in terms of empirical superiority and instead proposed a tri-dimensional model (see Figure 5). Here, they added to Berry's two dimensions by proposing an outcome of 'ethnogenesis', where immigrants develop a new culture by combining elements of different cultures in their day to day lives:

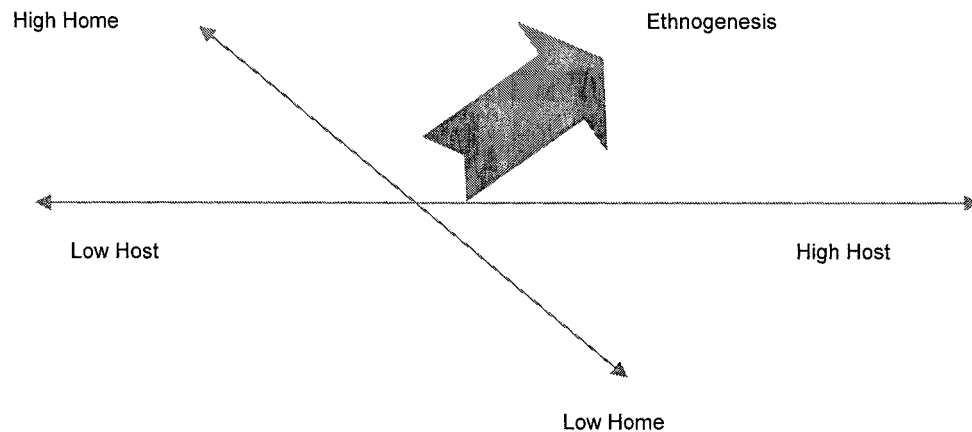


Figure 5: Tri-dimensional Model of Acculturation (Flannery, Reise and Yu, 2001, p. 1038)

Whilst this model may be suited to groups of permanent immigrants, its applicability to a student population appears questionable: given the short-term nature of each student stay it is unlikely that a new sub-culture will be formed in such a short period of time.

In an alternative attempt to build on the work of Berry (1980), Bourhis et al. (1997) developed the Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) which was designed to consider the views of the host culture as well as the immigrants. Indeed, it had earlier been suggested that even if immigrants wish to integrate this can only be done with the consent of the host culture (Greenland and Brown, 2005):

The key to successful acculturation is not only in the hands of the immigrant but also, and perhaps more importantly, in the hands of the host society

(Kim, 1979, p. 437)

The model (see Table 7) uses a slight variation on Berry's acculturation styles but also considers the viewpoint of the dominant culture to produce a more complex matrix. The IAM then compares the differing attitudes towards acculturation between immigrants and the dominant culture to class them as either consensual, problematic or conflictual. For example, if both groups support an integration strategy, the two groups are seen as being in consensus and thus have a greater chance of accommodating each others' cultural differences.

Host Community:	Immigrant Community: Low, medium vitality groups				
Low-Medium High Vitality Group	Integration	Assimilation	Separation	Anomie	Individualism
Integration	Consensual	Problematic	Conflictual	Problematic	Problematic
Assimilation	Problematic	Consensual	Conflictual	Problematic	Problematic
Segregation	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual
Exclusion	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual
Individualism	Problematic	Problematic	Problematic	Problematic	Consensual

Table 7: Interactive Acculturation Model (Bourhis et al., 1997, p. 382)

Again, despite the merits of this model it does not appear to be applicable to the student environment. In general, the host society does not enforce one particular acculturation style, and universities are not generally characterised by the level of prejudice that perhaps exists in other parts of society (Richardson and Skinner, 1990). This model may be more applicable to immigration scenarios where there is greater potential for conflict between cultures.

In conclusion, this section has attempted to outline the progressive development of acculturation theory and justify use of the bi-dimensional framework in the current study. As Flannery, Reise and Yu (2001) have suggested, academics should not consider any model as superior, and instead choose the one that best matches their research population. The bi-dimensional model will be utilised in the development of hypotheses in Section 3.10.

2.4 Determinants of the Acculturation Process

With the bi-dimensional acculturation model offering a range of potential acculturation styles to both temporary and permanent immigrants, it is of crucial importance to appreciate the plethora of variables that may affect the process. Padilla (1980) speculated that this list of variables would include language familiarity and usage, cultural heritage, inter-ethnic distance and levels of interaction. Whilst many of these have been researched and are discussed below, Sodowsky, Lai and Plake (1991) also felt that demographic factors such as gender, age, income, length of stay and generational status also warranted further investigation. The following section will examine this range of variables and also consider their applicability to the international student scenario.

2.4.1 Demographics

Age/Length of Stay: It would appear logical to assume that those who either move to the destination country at a younger age, or have spent a longer period of time there, will be most open to its cultural norms and values (Korgaankar, Karson and Lund, 2000; Palumbo and Teich, 2004). Penaloza (1994) felt that younger immigrants find the whole acculturation process less challenging, with those entering at a younger age potentially more likely to assimilate (Kara and Kara, 1996).

The majority of international students travelling to the UK for educational purposes are likely to be young (typically within the 19-25 age group) and may not necessarily have had any exposure to life in the UK other than through the media. Equally, within Northumbria University many international students only study in the UK for a maximum of two years, either as a 'top-up' to their undergraduate degree or for postgraduate study. Therefore with such a specific group of temporary immigrants, it may be that differences in acculturation styles according to age and length of stay are less significant than they may have been if the target population was comprised of permanent immigrants.

Generational Status: Padilla, Wagatsuma and Lindholm (1985) were amongst the earliest academics to consider the importance of generational status in the acculturation process. They investigated Japanese immigrants moving to the US and found that generational status is a

significant predictor of acculturation levels, a finding that has been replicated in more recent studies. Leong and Chou (1994) argued that whilst first generation immigrants experience problems with language and forming relationships, later generations are troubled by the contrasting cultures presented to them by their families and peer groups respectively.

Parameswaran and Pisharadi (2002) have noted that “the process of immigrant assimilation into a dominant culture could span generations” (2001, p. 273), suggesting that the initial group of immigrants (first generation), will experience different problems living in an alternative culture. Kim, Atkinson and Yang (1999) had earlier noted that first generation Asians moving to the US may have a different educational experience, which may make it difficult for them to adapt to life in a Western culture. In contrast, a sixth generation immigrant would instead be more familiar with American culture and as such would display many behaviours associated with Americans.

Sodowsky, Lai and Plake (1991) investigated Hispanics and Asian-Americans in the US and found that first generation immigrants perceived a greater level of prejudice from members of the host culture, and consequently spoke less English and were less acculturated than their second and third generation counterparts. This resulted in greater numbers of first generation immigrants adopting a separation acculturation style, with other generations adopting an integration or assimilation style.

Building on the importance of generational status, Padilla, Wagatsuma and Lindholm (1985) discussed the prevalence of cross-generational conflict. As family members in different generations will have differing acculturation experiences and styles, this can lead to significant conflict. For example, a first generation immigrant may be upset at seeing later generations become more immersed in the dominant culture, whilst second generation immigrants may feel torn between their original culture (represented by their family) and the dominant culture (represented by friends, school and other institutions: Leong and Chou, 1994; Melikian and De Karapetian, 1997).

Family Roles: Gentry, Jun and Tansuhaj (1995) considered how different members of the family unit may have differing acculturation experiences. They found evidence to suggest that whilst children are most likely to acquire elements of the host culture and thus assimilate or integrate (which fits in with similar research based on generational status), the mother of the household was most likely to hold on to her traditional cultural values. This ties in with the research of Ghaffarian (2001), who argued that Iranian men in the US were more exposed to the Western world through work whilst their wives spent more time in the family home. The more acculturated Iranian men were also opposed to the Western idea of women having greater independence and sharing household roles with their husbands.

Similarly, Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk (2004) investigated Chinese families moving to the US and found that husbands were reluctant to relinquish the higher status that is traditionally ascribed to the male by Confucian philosophy. In contrast, wives were more open to American values and the opportunities presented to them in terms of social networks and employment. However, as the vast majority of students coming to the UK do so individually, it is likely that the impact of the family will be less prevalent.

Aside from these differences between husbands and wives, research has found only limited evidence of a relationship between gender and acculturation: Sadowsky and Plake (1992) had suggested that men perceive higher levels of prejudice (possibly due to their increased contact with the home culture). Elsewhere, Zheng, Sang and Wang (2004) investigated Chinese students in Australia and noted that a slightly larger proportion of female students were marginalised than males. However, in general researchers have refuted the idea that these differences are statistically significant.

Education and Income: It has been suggested that individuals with a higher education level and also higher income levels were more likely to be more acculturated (Korgaankar, Karson and Lund, 2000; Rajagopalan and Hertmeyer, 2005). Rissel (1997) employed multiple regression techniques to confirm that education levels were particularly important: it appears logical to assume that those with a university education and thus

exposure to an international student environment may be open to other cultural backgrounds and consequently more willing to adapt. Penaloza (1994) had earlier argued that education is a less relevant factor than age and social class. However, the same author did suggest that language ability was an important variable which could arguably be linked to the education level of the immigrant.

In this study, all potential respondents are either enrolled for undergraduate or postgraduate study within the university and will be to some extent dependent on the financial help of family, as studying whilst working full-time is not recommended by the university. Consequently it may be realistic to expect that as a highly educated cohort they will show an increased willingness to adapt to UK culture, although this link may be lessened by the temporary nature of their stay (discussed in Section 2.4.3).

The above summary has outlined a range of demographic factors that have been associated with the acculturation process. Indeed, Deyo, Diehl, Hazuda and Stern (1985) have argued that their acculturation scale scores “were found to have important associations with major demographic characteristics which are thought to correlate with acculturation” (1995, p. 54). As a result of this, a range of demographic information was taken from respondents during data collection (see Chapter Five).

2.4.2 Communication

It has also been argued that some level of interaction between cultures is required in order for immigrants to understand and potentially adopt the values and behaviours of the dominant group. O'Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber (1986) noted that the three main issues are concerned with language ability, interpersonal interaction and the mass media.

Language: It has been widely suggested that language, as well as length of stay and social relationships, is the single biggest determinant of acculturation (Deyo et al., 1985; Kara and Kara, 1996; Ueltschy, 2002). An immigrant with a greater ability in the host culture language will be in a better position to understand the mass media and form personal relationships with individuals from the dominant culture. This has been empirically supported by Ownbey and Horridge (1998), who measured the acculturation of Hispanic immigrants on a uni-dimensional scale and found those with higher language ability averaged a score of 3.68/5 on their acculturation scale, whilst those with lower language proficiency averaged only 2.28.

Social Interaction: Jamal and Chapman (2000) emphasised the importance of social interaction for immigrants:

Acculturation of ethnic minority groups, however, doesn't occur in a vacuum – it occurs and unfolds within the context of intra and inter-group relations

(Jamal and Chapman, 2000, p. 366)

Kim (1979) argued that if culture was based on a set of shared or common beliefs, then relationships are crucial in sharing these beliefs with immigrant groups. In a university context, the relationships international students forge with local students may be critical in both their cultural and academic adaptation.

Mass Media: It has been argued that the media is an important agent in the acculturation process (O'Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber, 1986). Many immigrants are intimidated by the idea of forming first-hand relationships with the dominant culture and therefore find the media a safer way of learning the new culture. An over-reliance on the media has been linked to the outcome of overshooting (see Section 2.3.1). Equally, an immigrant who relies solely on the media will only pick up more superficial behaviours and will not understand the less visible values of the dominant culture. For an international student, it may be that the media is used heavily to prepare individuals for life in another culture before the actual move takes place, at which point their first hand contact with local students becomes more important.

In summary, a review of the literature suggests that issues around language and social interaction are the single biggest factors affecting the acculturation process. Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk (2001) reviewed a total of 50 scales designed to measure acculturation and noted that the vast majority included items on these concepts. The importance of these two

issues has also been supported by Pons et al. (2001) and in later empirical work by Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk (2004). Therefore any attempt to measure acculturation in this study should be sure to incorporate items on both language ability and social interaction to accurately assess student acculturation styles.

2.4.3 Situational Influences

Cultural Distance: Whereas much of the early research on acculturation was conducted on Hispanics moving into the US, in time academics have focused more on situations where there is a greater 'cultural distance' (difference between the immigrant and host country cultures). Lee and Um (1992) believe that the level of cultural distance impacts upon both the outcomes and the pace of acculturation, and consequently the acculturation experiences of a wider range of immigrants need to be investigated.

Padilla, Wagatsuma and Lindholm (1985) had earlier claimed that greater cultural distance results in higher levels of stress for the immigrant as they struggle to come to terms with a very different way of life. According to Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, the differences between East-Asian cultures and the UK are particularly pronounced. This may mean that East-Asian students coming to the UK face significant acculturation challenges throughout their sojourn, an area which warrants further investigation:

Generally, the more difference between the two cultures, the more significant the study of acculturation problems would be

(Zheng, Sang and Wang, 2004, p. 59)

Host Culture Attitudes toward Immigrants: One of the major criticisms of Berry's (1980) bi-dimensional model is that it assumes immigrant autonomy in their choice of acculturation styles (Alvarez and Alvarez, 2004). In reality, the attitudes of the dominant culture are likely to be influential in how an immigrant is able to adapt. For example, because of military and political differences between the US, UK and the Middle East, it could be argued that Muslims moving to Western countries may face additional problems surrounding racial prejudice (Sodowsky and Plake, 1992). This may be exacerbated if the media within the dominant culture paints a particularly negative picture of the alternative culture. Novas et al. (2005) argued that the actual origin of the immigrants can be significant in the welcome they receive: for example, in Germany immigrants of Turkish origin have been more widely accepted than their Former Yugoslavian counterparts, suggesting that an element of ethnocentrism may still be evident in some cross-cultural interactions.

Linked to this idea, Florack, Piontkowski, Rohmann, Balzer and Perzig (2003) note that if the dominant culture is not threatened by immigrants they are more open to integration. Should immigrants attempt to separate themselves from the host culture this results in higher levels of threat. The same authors argued that when the host culture is intimidated by the type

or number of immigrants they may respond by accentuating their own national heritage (which is reflected in the UK with increased calls for a public holiday to celebrate St. George's Day).

However, in the majority of countries attitudes towards immigrants have become more welcoming over recent years. For example, Lee and Tse's (1994) study of Hong Kong immigrants in Canada found that a growing number of immigrants were adopting a separation acculturation style, a trend they believed was down in part to members of the dominant culture:

Our society's growing acceptance of a multi-cultural mosaic may help ethnic minority groups retain their cultural characteristics

(Lee and Tse, 1994, p. 38)

Bourhis et al. (1997) felt that the legal status ascribed to immigrants upon their arrival has a notable effect on how they are perceived by the wider public. If they are given equal rights in terms of political voting and employment opportunities this may improve perceptions of the group in the long-term.

A review of the literature has not identified any research that indicates international students are prone to discrimination in a university environment. Northumbria has positioned itself as an international university so it would be particularly interesting to note if international

students have experienced any discrimination from members of the host culture.

Nature of Immigration: It has also been suggested that those who have moved to another country voluntarily are more likely to assimilate or integrate than those who have been forced to move (Sodowsky, Lai and Plake, 1991). Triandis et al. (1986) believed that when the acculturating individual is not a coloniser and consequently has little power, they have little choice than to adapt to the dominant culture to some extent. In an international student scenario, it is presumed the individual is studying abroad on a voluntary basis (although there may be an element of pressure from family members), and as such this may increase their desire to integrate with UK culture. Indeed, it has been suggested that the chance to mix with other cultural groups is a key reason for studying in another country (Chalmers and Volet, 1997).

For voluntary immigrants, a key issue in their acculturation is the planned length of stay within the dominant culture. Ghaffarian (2001) noted that Iranians in the US resisted assimilation because they believed their stay was only a temporary one. This may prove to be a particularly relevant issue for international students: if the intention is to return home upon graduation then this may limit their interest in and adoption of elements of UK culture.

2.5 Previous Research Linking Acculturation and Marketing/Consumer Behaviour

Early research in the acculturation field was typically conducted by anthropologists and psychologists, whose primary concerns were the well-being of immigrant groups and the impact they had upon the host society (particularly in the US). However, towards the end of the 20th century, academics with an interest in the business field began to acknowledge that the way in which an immigrant group adapts to life in another culture should help to explain and predict their consumption patterns (Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983). Gilly (1995) later suggested that long-term immigrants have to “engage in various consumer behaviours in order to conduct everyday life” (p. 505), a statement that would appear equally applicable to sojourners such as international students. Such comments have led to a flurry of business research focused on particular immigrant groups:

Over the last ten years, the body of literature that explores the complex relationships between culture and consumption has grown exponentially

(Ogden, Schau and Ogden, 2004, p. 1)

The same authors believed that marketers were at a disadvantage when targeting immigrant groups because academics had so far failed to investigate sufficiently how acculturation may affect the consumer behaviour of these ‘micro-cultural’ groups. Indeed, D’Rozario and Douglas (1999) felt that studies of these micro-cultures were particularly important

because such groups are likely to be responsive to targeted marketing campaigns.

Prior to this recognition of immigrant consumer behaviour as a crucial area for investigation, many American marketers had been guilty of following the adage that “one does as Americans do”, suggesting a very assimilationist viewpoint that different cultural groups do not require different treatment as consumers (Seitz, 1998). However, marketers would be foolish to ignore acculturation levels as these could be related to a wide variety of marketing issues, including attitudes towards advertising, materialism, and price awareness (Penaloza, 1989):

Marketing efforts based on the assumption that assimilation is the only mode of acculturation may well alienate large segments of the acculturating group

(Jun, Ball and Gentry, 1993, p.80)

Gentry, Jun and Tansuhaj (1995) felt that acculturating people typically suffer from problems such as stress and mental illness, feelings of marginality and alienation. Consequently they recommended that marketers who wish to develop relationships with such groups should attempt to reassure these customers, particular through the early stages of their adaptation. Although in an ideal situation, international students who have chosen to move to the UK would not experience extreme difficulties, a welcoming approach from UK organisations may well ease this transition

and result in the long-term acceptance of a particular product or brand (Data-on, 2000).

Gilly (1995) noted that short-term immigrants are likely to use fellow expatriates or students as reference groups to help with early consumer decisions. Such new immigrants are uncomfortable with being an unknowledgeable consumer and therefore are temporarily dependent on the experiences of others. Without such support networks, immigrants may lack the ability to evaluate goods effectively and go through the rather traumatic process of learning from their own mistakes (Penaloza, 1989). The same author also found that Latino students in the US quickly adopted American products that were low cost and high visibility in an attempt to assimilate into the host culture as quickly as possible. However, Maldonado and Tansuhaj (1999) suggested that in time immigrants may begin to experience dissatisfaction with many new products and feel a sense of loss concerning products from their home country, which for students may be linked to feelings of homesickness (see Section 2.6).

When considering Berry's bi-dimensional model, it is logical to assume that those adopting either an assimilation or integration style are those most likely to adopt consumer behaviours associated with the host culture, whilst those who separate will attempt to retain their original consumer behaviours (Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2002). However, an immigrant's ability to maintain their host culture consumer preferences may be dependent on the availability of products from their home country.

Maldonado and Tansuhaj (2002) also distinguished between attitudinal and behavioural acculturation: they believed that immigrants may change their behaviours (and product choices) relatively quickly, whilst their attitudes towards these products may take longer to change. The importance of these attitudes has yet to be investigated in detail as the majority of acculturation scales focus on behavioural issues (Kim, Atkinson and Yang, 1999).

Previous work linking acculturation to marketing has focused on two main areas: immigrant consumer behaviour and marketing communications, which are both discussed below. When investigating such concepts, researchers have often used a standard three-part questionnaire, including an acculturation scale, an instrument to measure the marketing issue of interest (be it consumer behaviour, advertising preferences etc.), and a section collecting demographic data (see Chapter Five).

Consumer Behaviour: Luna and Gupta (2001) have suggested that culture is known to affect consumer behaviour significantly, and as such it is logical to suggest that the acculturation of immigrants will be central in how they choose, consume and dispose of products. Lee and Um (1992) investigated if acculturation had an impact on the information search conducted by immigrants before they purchased products. They measured acculturation uni-dimensionally and found that highly acculturated immigrants were likely to rely too largely on stereotypes to guide their purchases (this may result in what was coined as 'overshooting' in Section

2.3), whilst lower acculturated individuals were more reliant on their family and fellow immigrants for advice. Webster (1992) conducted a similar study and found further evidence to suggest that lower-acculturated immigrants relied on family and friends for advice. However, the study also showed that highly-acculturated individuals used other resources such as consumer reports to make purchase decisions.

Ownbey and Horridge (1997) considered the concept of information search but also the wider issue of shopping orientations. They found that those who were less acculturated relied more on opinion leaders for guidance, possibly owing to a lack of confidence. As individuals became more acculturated they were less likely to provide shopping advice as they were spending increased amounts of time with members of the host culture who did not necessarily require such assistance. Instead they would use their increased knowledge of the host culture to inform less acculturated family members. Shim and Chen (1996) studied Chinese immigrants in America and found lower-acculturated individuals were confused by the product offering and were influenced by factors such as price and convenience. In contrast, highly-acculturated immigrants behaved largely like Americans in terms of their lifestyles. The study also found evidence that assimilating immigrants were keen to consume products conspicuously to demonstrate their changing behaviours to the host culture.

However, not all studies have found definitive links between acculturation and consumer behaviour. O'Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber (1986) suggested that less-acculturated Hispanics would be more likely to display higher levels of loyalty to companies, possibly because they were accustomed to a limited choice of products in their home country. However, only limited empirical evidence was found to support this. Ogden (2005) again considered Hispanics and focused on the dominance of males in purchase decisions, but found that this was not related to level of acculturation but instead to the type of product being purchased.

The above summary shows that acculturation may be a relevant issue in numerous elements of consumer behaviour, but has yet to be considered in relation to issues surrounding dissatisfaction and consumer complaint behaviour, which will be discussed further in Section 3.10.

Marketing Communications: In particular, researchers have been keen to learn how acculturation could influence advertising preferences amongst immigrant groups. Khairullah (1998) focused on perceptions of advertising amongst Indian-Americans, and concluded that low and medium acculturated individuals preferred advertising from their home country, whilst highly acculturated immigrants preferred host country advertising. Although immigrants are likely to become open to host country advertising in time, this does suggest that marketers need to tailor their messages to appeal to more recent immigrants. In a similar study, Ueltschy (2002) found that highly-acculturated Hispanics preferred the use

of American models in advertising messages, and in time became insulted by marketers who used immigrant models specifically to appeal to them. From this it was concluded that using models from a variety of backgrounds was best practice as it represented wider social acceptance. Ueltschy and Krampf (1997) had earlier suggested that the language used in print advertising should be connected to not only acculturation but also the education level of the immigrant group.

On the back of such research, Negrete (2005) criticised those companies who still believed that immigrant groups should not be targeted using different strategies:

They have failed to understand one of the basic tenets of advertising: that the only way for brands to connect with consumers is through insight and emotion, and thus, through context and culture

(Negrete, 2005, p. 25)

The same author suggested that to advertise effectively to immigrant groups, advertisers need to consider more than just translation, but also the cultural connotations of their messages.

A limited amount of research has considered how acculturation could impact other forms of marketing communications. Korgaankar, Karson and Lund (2000) found that assimilated immigrants were more likely to approve of direct marketing activity, purchase from companies who communicate using these methods and view it as good for the economy.

Lesser-acculturated individuals were not exposed to such communications in their home country and as such held more negative attitudes, with these findings backing up the earlier work of Seitz (1998). Lee and Tse (1994) found that immigrants' use of the media varied between home and host culture media. As immigrants may not be accustomed to seeing advertising in various print media, this may explain why lesser-acculturated individuals were not open to print media advertising.

Eastlick and Lotz (2000) noted that acculturation levels were relevant in attitudes towards retailing: immigrants tend to have more positive attitudes towards retailers who employ fellow immigrants as sales personnel and sell culturally-specific merchandise. These findings show that marketers need to consider immigrant needs across all elements of their marketing activity.

Much of the above work linking acculturation to consumption (e.g. O'Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber, 1986) has been criticised by Seitz (1998) for clustering a number of nationalities (e.g. Mexicans and Cubans being labelled as Hispanics), and for focusing on simple product categories instead of complex services (for example, higher education). However, from the above summary it is clear that acculturation is a valid issue for companies and should be considered as an important segmentation variable in multi-cultural markets (O'Guinn, Faber and Meyer, 1986; Nwankwo and Lindridge, 1998; Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 1999; Parameswaran and Pisharadi, 2002; Palumbo and Teich, 2004). This has

led numerous authors to call for further research, as acculturation may prove to be a more significant determinant of consumer behaviour than country of birth:

The effects of acculturation and ethnicity on the consumer choice behaviour require additional research

(Kara and Kara, 1996, p. 220)

Despite the evidence provided from academics as to the importance of acculturation in understanding customers, only a limited number of companies have made such a commitment to immigrant groups. Hodgkiss (1996) reported that the Bank of England were beginning to segment immigrant customers according to their generational status. They believed that each group had differing needs and should receive service that reflects their exposure to Western culture. Similarly, Fitzgerald (2000) noted that Kraft were using data from a major US consumer panel to tailor their advertising to differing groups depending on their acculturation. As the number of immigrants into the UK continues to increase, both from new European Union member states and other parts of the globe, it is likely that more companies will start to consider acculturation levels when targeting immigrant groups.

2.6 Student Acculturation

Whilst the majority of acculturation research has focused on permanent immigrants, Data-on (2000) has criticised academics for a lack of attention being paid to temporary sojourners, and in particular international students, despite their obvious financial contribution to universities in the US and UK:

When people move from their home-culture to another host-culture for career advancement, educational or personal reasons, alterations of lifestyle frequently occur

(Data-on, 2000, p. 428)

Indeed, Sodowsky and Plake (1992) had earlier argued that research was required into student acculturation because of the financial, academic and cultural contribution international students make to university life: Butcher and McGrath (2004) observed that the number of international students in New Zealand has: “simultaneously anecdotally saved institutions from bankruptcy while putting increasing strain on student support services” (p. 540).

As Feldham and Rosenthal (1990) have suggested, younger immigrants or sojourners are often torn between their original culture (which is strongly represented by older family members) and the host culture, which is visible to them through new peer groups and everyday life. Such conflict can prove stressful for an international student who is keen to maintain

relationships with those back home whilst simultaneously integrating with the host society. According to Bourhis et al. (1997), adapting to an unfamiliar culture and education system is complicated further when there are a wide variety of ethnic groups on one campus.

It has been widely documented that international students face a number of challenges when studying in an unfamiliar culture, particularly as many will have no prior experience of living abroad: Carsky and Coleman (1998) found that students who were moving to a notably different culture actually anticipated adjustment problems in the early stages of their sojourn. Despite these problems, international students are often still expected to perform as well as home students who do not face problems of cultural adaptation (Garcia-Vasquez, 1995).

In addition to the organisational problems of enrolment, securing a visa (Hart, 2008) and other administrative tasks, international students may suffer from a lack of social ties, separation from family, homesickness, isolation and cultural adjustment (Leung, 2001). Shih and Brown (2000) also felt that homesickness was a key issue, and noted that financial difficulties can further complicate the acculturation process. At Northumbria international students pay up to £15,000 per year in tuition fees, meaning financial problems may well be significant in their overall adaptation to UK life.

Other difficulties that are commonly faced by international students may include prejudice and discrimination (Lay and Safdar, 2003), language difficulties (Kagan and Cohen, 1990) or an inability to adapt to more 'critical' approaches to teaching and learning (Butcher and McGrath, 2004), the last issue being of particular significance to students from Asian cultures. All of the above problems can result in poorer academic performance, decreased physical and mental health and negative attitudes towards the host culture (Shih and Brown, 2000).

When attempting to bring international students to a university, Carsky and Coleman (1998) felt that an initial critical mass of students from any one country needs to be recruited and only when positive word of mouth spreads back home through students and agents will further students be added to the international community. Indeed, Koshima and Loh (2006) found that having a higher number of international students can lead to better psychological adjustment as it can help them to identify with their original culture throughout their studies. Greenland and Brown (2005) suggested that attitudes towards the acculturation process could be related to the existence of prejudice, be that within the university or the wider host society. Butcher and McGrath (2004) believed that some host students see Chinese students as a threatening sub-culture which may result in some form of discriminatory behaviour. However, in reality all international student cohorts should be seen as contributing to a more culturally diverse campus.

Whilst most students will face some form of acculturative stress, this may vary significantly by individual:

Importantly, there seem to be considerable variations in the degree to which individuals experience acculturative stress. For some, acculturation is a challenging and enriching experience. For others, it is devastating

(Greenland and Brown, 2005, p. 375)

Sodowsky and Plake (1992) had earlier conducted a study of various international student cohorts in the US and concluded that students perceive high levels of prejudice from members of the host culture, who in contrast felt that international students were treated equally. This led to various international groups failing to acculturate and not showing a willingness to use the English language on campus. Although it may be unfeasible for universities to control any prejudice from wider society, there is perhaps a need for greater cultural awareness from non-immigrant scholars:

The overwhelming evidence of international people's discontent with the host country's reception needs to be attended to, closely, especially in a university setting which is culturally, intellectually and financially enriched by international people

(Sodowsky and Plake, 1992, p. 57)

Greenland and Brown (2005) investigated the levels of stress amongst acculturating students and found that in the majority of cases, the level of

stress experienced increases sharply after arrival but will gradually subside over time (see Figure 6).

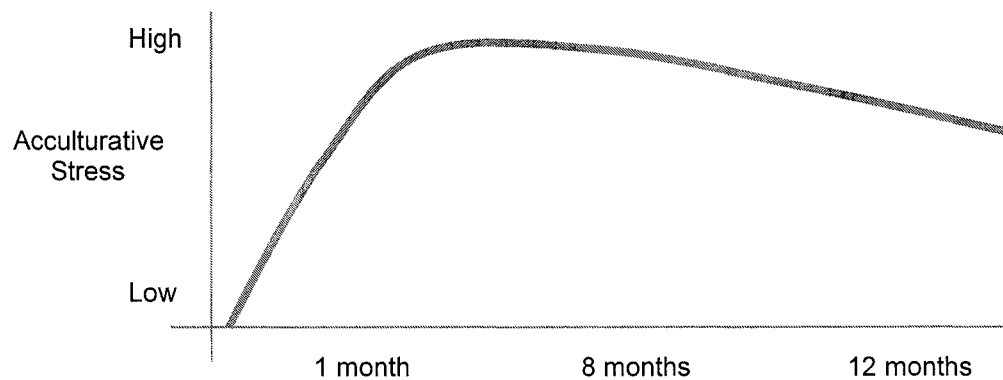


Figure 6: Acculturative Stress of International Students (Greenland and Brown, 2005, p. 384).

Related to the concept of acculturative stress is what UKCOSA (2008) refer to as 'culture shock'. Should an international student feel particularly shocked by the difference in cultures and educational systems early in their stay, this can result in emotional instability and presumably an increased propensity to withdraw from the university. To alleviate this shock, universities encourage international students to meet other co-nationals upon arrival (e.g. through induction events) to remind them of their home culture. Although this may help students to adapt in the short-term, it may be that these relationships are favoured in the long-term as opposed to integrating with students from other cultures (Hart, 2008).

A key issue in the acculturation of international students is their friendship networks. Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977) highlighted that international students tend to choose friends for three reasons:

- **Academic Achievement:** Host-nationals may be in the best position to help international students with assessed work, therefore cross-cultural relationships may be sought.
- **Pressure to maintain original culture:** This may be imposed individually or by family expectations, and can result in somewhat defensive and nationalist behaviour. Often, international students will seek out friendships with co-nationals in a deliberate attempt to stop them becoming 'Westernised'.
- **University Pressure:** "Foreign students are under normative pressure to 'interculturalise' i.e. form close social relations with individuals from a wide spectrum of national groups" (Bochner, McLeod and Lin, 1977, p. 280). Although there are no rewards or sanctions associated with this, universities often see this as vital in developing a truly international campus.

In terms of different friendship groups, Koshima and Loh (2006) distinguished between mono-cultural networks (co-nationals), bi-cultural networks (including local students and staff) and multi-cultural networks (a blend of various cultures). They concluded that relationships with local students are highly valued by international students, but such relationships can be difficult to form. In an earlier study, Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977) found that international students spent more time with co-nationals and were more likely to class them as their closest friends, something which may impede their overall integration into university life.

Zheng, Sang and Weng (2004) utilised Berry's (1980) bi-dimensional framework to investigate which acculturation styles were most commonly adopted by Chinese students across ten Australian universities. Their results indicated that only around 31% of students were integrated with a similar proportion of respondents becoming separated (see Table 8). In addition their results showed some notable differences between men and women: whilst males appear more likely to integrate or assimilate, a larger proportion of females appear to be marginalised. Given the apparent cultural similarities between Australia and the UK (Hofstede, 1980), it would be of value to universities to see if such findings are replicated in a UK university.

	Integration	Assimilation	Separation	Marginalisation	Total
Male	30	24	20	10	84
Female	17	10	21	25	73
Total	47	34	41	35	157

Table 8: Acculturation Styles of Chinese Students in Australia (Zheng, Sang and Wang, 2004, p. 65).

The same authors also found that students from Mainland China were more likely to identify with the host culture than those from Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan, which advocates the view that Asian students should not be considered as a homogenous cohort and will have differing acculturation experiences:

Asian international students include very diverse identities, languages, norms, values, customs and cultures. When describing Asian international students, it is important to be cautious about making generalisations

(Shih and Brown, 2000, p. 36)

Zheng, Sang and Wang (2004) concluded that integrated students have higher levels of student well-being than their assimilated, separated and marginalised counterparts: indeed, integrated students have a more fulfilling and enriching study abroad experience (Butcher and McGrath, 2004). This suggests that universities should seek to ensure that international students retain links with their original culture whilst simultaneously interacting with others. Leung (2001) also considered the acculturation of Chinese students in Australia and found that Chinese students were less satisfied with their academic and social lives. This led to the conclusion that Chinese students may well be in need of additional pastoral and support services to aid them in the acculturation process.

Given the increased global competition in the HE sector, there certainly appears to be an immediate need to understand the acculturation styles of international students studying in the UK. For example, Feldham and Rosenthal (1990) have argued that because of the extensive contact with co-nationals and family back home, Chinese students are unlikely to become assimilated into the host culture. Shih and Brown (2000) have suggested that students who maintain their own culture and do not simply assimilate may feel a heightened sense of maturity and self-confidence as a result. The choice of an acculturation style may also be related to the

student's long-term intentions: Sodowsky and Plake (1992) have suggested that those students who adopt an integration style may be doing so as they intend to move permanently to the host culture.

In a university environment the international student population is regularly being replenished with new sojourners (Ueltschy, 2002). As length of residence is a key determinant in the student acculturation process (Zheng, Sang and Wang, 2004) this may result in a wider variety of acculturation styles being evident at any one time. Consequently, the acculturation styles of students at Northumbria University will be considered further in Chapters Six and Seven.

2.7 Methodological Traditions in the Acculturation Field

At this point, it is relevant to consider the dominant methodologies in the acculturation field that have been used in many of the aforementioned studies. Many of the issues raised in the following section have informed the research methods design, discussed further in Chapter Five.

Possibly coinciding with the growth in immigration, Franco (1983) noted an upsurge in interest surrounding the measurement of acculturation in the early 1980s. This has led to the development of a plethora of scales designed for differing immigrant groups, using a variety of determinants and measurement techniques. Indeed, Johnson (2004) has noted that researchers now have to "pick their way through a rich but disorganised

set of measures that cannot be used without deliberation and difficult choices” (p. 1280-1281).

The predominant methodology in the acculturation field is quantitative in nature, with the majority of researchers attempting to develop measurement tools that can categorise immigrants using either the uni-dimensional model (plotting individuals along a single continuum) or the bi-dimensional model (plotting individuals within a cultural space – Olmedo, 1980). It has been suggested that the diversity within the field of acculturation measurement is largely down to the lack of an agreed definition (as discussed in Section 2.2):

Much diversity is therefore found in measurement approaches to any one of the above constructs (e.g. subjective vs. objective, single-item vs. multi-item, nominal vs. continuous measurement, uni-polar vs. bi-polar etc.)

(Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk, 2001, p. 608)

The quantitative methodologies have historically been characterised by self-report surveys which are obviously dependent on the honesty of the immigrant (O’Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber, 1986). Indeed, it has been suggested that honesty is a significant issue if dealing with groups that include illegal immigrants (who will naturally be hesitant to declare their own identity: Eastlick and Lotz, 2000). To ensure reasonable response rates many studies have administered surveys via post and followed this up with telephone calls to overcome objections. However, Barry (2001) has suggested that the advent of the Internet may offer a preferred means

of reaching respondents because of the greater sense of anonymity it offers.

Olmedo (1980) highlighted four major methodological issues that need to be addressed by acculturation researchers:

1. **Qualitative versus Quantitative:** Whilst numerical approaches have been favoured historically, it has been suggested that researchers need to go beyond purely positivist methods to truly understand the concept (Nwankwo and Lindridge, 1998).
2. **Uni-dimensional versus bi-dimensional measurements:** As discussed in Section 2.3, recent theoretical thinking has moved towards the bi-dimensional acculturation framework. However, many researchers still persist with out-dated measurement methods, perhaps due to their perceived simplicity (Alvarez and Alvarez, 2004).
3. **Observed versus Latent variables:** The traditional focus has been on observed variables (such as language usage) which are easier to measure. However it has been suggested that more subjective measures that tap into issues such as immigrant values may also be valid determinants of acculturation.
4. **Correlation versus Causation:** Much of the work on acculturation has produced results that are correlational in nature (for example, the studies linking acculturation and consumer behaviour discussed in Section 2.6). This can lead to results being ambiguously

interpreted as acculturation research “does not usually benefit from the controls available in experimental settings, where it is easier to rule out the effects of extraneous or confounding variables” (Olmedo, 1980, p. 30).

Wallendorf and Reilly (1983) commented that both quantitative and qualitative methodologies can be problematic, and can raise problems surrounding language, response bias and differing levels of tolerance to research across cultural groups. Further to this, Gentry, Jun and Tansuhaj (1995) felt that many researchers are unable to appreciate the values of other cultural groups, a particular problem when engaging in qualitative research. Sadowsky, Lai and Plake (1991) listed a number of key limitations in previous acculturation studies:

- Samples representing one extreme in acculturation levels (e.g. entirely assimilated);
- Scales using only one determinant of acculturation (e.g. language);
- Inefficient psychometric information provided for each instrument (concerning reliability and validity, also raised by Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk, 2001).

As the current study is concentrating on international students, the first criticism is not applicable to the current study: unlike other research into acculturation, the current study does not have the specific intention of tapping a wide range of acculturation styles.

Another problematic issue for researchers who utilise the bi-dimensional framework is recruiting immigrants who have become marginalised (Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2002). If individuals have become withdrawn from society, they are less likely to be included in databases used to sample respondents and will avoid approaches from researchers such as face-to-face interviewers. Table 9 provides the results of three studies which have investigated the four different acculturation styles across a selection of different cultural groups. Although these are not suitable for detailed comparison due to the differing cultures investigated, it is interesting that in two cases no marginalised immigrants were found.

Author	Population Studied	Integration (%)	Assimilation (%)	Separation (%)	Marginalisation (%)
Dana and Berry (1994)	Central Americans in Canada	76	5	19	0
Kim et al. (2002)	Cambodians in the US	93	1	6	0
Kosic (2002)	Polish and Croats in Italy	37	35	0	28

Table 9: Breakdowns of acculturation styles from previous studies (Various)

Despite the dominance of purely positivist research methodologies, some researchers have adopted alternative approaches to studying acculturation. Maldonado and Tansuhaj (1999) used in-depth interviews with Latino immigrants in America and conducted these in the respondents' homes or workplaces so they could observe their behaviour in less threatening surroundings. More recently, Keel and Drew (2004)

used interviews with immigrant married couples to understand how the acculturation process had impacted on family roles. In such cases, the authors did not overly structure interviews to allow the respondents to direct discussion towards their biggest acculturation challenges. Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk (2001) had advocated the use of dual reporting (i.e. asking a couple to participate in research), however this was not a feasible strategy when targeting a student population.

Alternatively, some researchers have adopted more ethnographic methods such as participant observation, which has allowed them to truly appreciate the daily experiences of an immigrant group (Penaloza, 1994; Ogden, Schau and Ogden, 2004). Such an approach allows insight into not only how immigrants behave but the underlying reasons for this, however this method does raise ethical questions and places a large dependency on the researcher to blend in with the immigrants' cultural heritage.

It would certainly appear that a comprehensive investigation into the acculturation of any immigrant or sojourn group should utilise a combination of methods, which could first understand the acculturation styles of each individual and then attempt to understand their experiences in further detail. This will be discussed further in Section 3.10.

Despite more recent work on research methods, it is clear that Berry's viewpoint that "a good deal of confusion surrounds the measurement of

acculturation” (1980, p. 12) is still relevant today. Indeed, it may be that the plethora of variables that can impact upon the acculturation process may make comprehensive measurement an unfeasible goal:

It appears obvious that acculturation is a complex process and that its rate is determined by a variety of factors that are not yet fully understood

(Padilla, 1980, p. 52)

However, a review of the literature identified a number of examples of good practice when designing and administering acculturation scales, many of which have been considered in the design of the current study (Chapter Five):

- Given that language is an important indicator of acculturation (see Section 2.4.2), Maldonado and Tansuhaj (2002) recommend providing respondents with a choice of languages in which to complete surveys (i.e. the language of both the original and dominant culture).
- If the scale is to be administered in another language, it should be back-translated to ensure accuracy (Jun, Ball, and Gentry, 1993; Korgankaar, Karson and Lund, 2000).
- Testing potential scale items on a sample of target respondents to ensure understanding and correct translation (Eastlick and Lotz, 2000).
- Scale items should not be limited to one determinant of acculturation (e.g. language: O’Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber, 1986).

2.7.1 Acculturation Scales

Reflecting the previous theoretical understanding of acculturation, the majority of acculturation scales evident in the literature adopt a uni-dimensional approach, and therefore assign individuals a score which will categorise them as either not assimilated or completely assimilated.

Possibly the most famous and widely used example of this was the SL-ASIA, a scale developed by Suinn, Ahuna and Khoo (1992) to focus on Asian-Americans. This scale included 21 items covering issues such as language and ethnic identification and gave respondents a score from 1 to 5, whereby:

- 1.00 = Asian-identified (not assimilated);
- 3.00 = Bi-cultural;
- 5.00 = Western-identified (assimilated).

Perhaps due to its simplicity in implementation, this has remained the most popular scale amongst acculturation researchers. Strangely, despite authors discussing the increased popularity of the bi-dimensional approach, many have gone on to use the SL-ASIA in their own empirical research (e.g. Ownbey and Horridge, 1997). However, Suinn, Ahuna and Khoo (1992) themselves acknowledge that such a scale doesn't tap into recent theoretical thinking on the subject and thus may be flawed. In particular, its inability to highlight marginalised individuals would be a

particular concern for those concerned with the well-being of immigrants or sojourners (Barry, 2001).

As will be discussed further in Chapter Five, over half of the acculturation scales considered in the current study were based on the uni-dimensional approach, perhaps suggesting that some researchers are not totally convinced by the bi-dimensional argument. This is in spite of “strong empirical support for the existence of the four styles of acculturation among some groups” (Kim et al., 2002).

Kim et al. (2002) noted that acculturation scales can be either culture-general (applicable to any immigrant group across the world) or culture-specific (focusing on a particular group and situation). It was argued that although general scales may have wider applicability, they may include vague items which may hinder researchers in producing culturally-specific findings. A review of scales in the literature revealed that the majority are developed with particular immigrant groups in mind, with a particular focus on Hispanics moving to the US. However, more recently attention has turned to other migrating groups such as Asians (Ownbey and Horridge, 1997).

As has already been considered in Section 2.4, the wide variety of determinants relevant to acculturation presents researchers with a vast pool of potential scale items. There does appear to be agreement as to the importance of including items on language and social interaction (e.g.

Suinn, Ahuna and Khoo, 1992; Landrine and Klonoff, 1994; Cuellar, Arnold and Maldonado, 1995). However, a review of existing acculturation scales uncovered a plethora of other items that have been used to measure acculturation (albeit less frequently than items covering language and social interaction: see Table 10). Such variance amongst researchers underlines the complex process of developing an acculturation scale and suggests that perhaps future work should instead focus on empirically testing existing scales to understand their particular benefits.

Author	Items Included
Franco (1983)	Perceived Discrimination
O'Guinn, Faber and Meyer (1986)	Cultural Involvement (e.g. religious events)
Suinn, Ahuna and Khoo (1992)	Ethnic Pride
Landrine and Klonoff (1994)	Superstitions and Cultural Possessions
Ward and Kennedy (1994)	Food preferences
Quester and Chong (2001)	Demographic Details
Rajagopalan and Hertmeyer (2005)	Media Usage and Fashion

Table 10: Variety of Items used in Existing Acculturation Scales (Various)

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced and defined the concept of acculturation and discussed the various models that have been designed to understand the process. In particular, the bi-dimensional model has been deemed appropriate for the current study and will be discussed in Chapter Three in the context of developing suitable research questions. The chapter has also considered the range of factors that can affect the acculturation process and also the particular challenges faced by international students. Chapter Three will investigate the concept of CCB and lead to the development of research questions in Section 3.10.

Chapter Three: Consumer Complaint Behaviour

3.1 Overview of Chapter

Further to the previous discussion on acculturation, this chapter will follow a similar format in introducing and defining the concepts of dissatisfaction and CCB and providing a brief history of the topics' increased prominence in consumer behaviour research. From here, a number of models of CCB will be critically reviewed, and the literature on complaint handling will also be explored. The chapter will also review a number of 'triggers' that can affect how consumers react to dissatisfactory incidents, with particular emphasis on the importance of cultural background. This will lead to a discussion of CCB in a university environment, and the chapter will close with a discussion of acculturation in relation to CCB and the development of research questions and hypotheses for the data collection process.

It should be noted that much of the literature referred to in this chapter comes from the late 1970s and 1980s, when attention first turned towards the concept of CCB. Whilst more recent research has been incorporated where appropriate, it was felt that much of the most significant and relevant work was conducted in these earlier studies. Indeed, research on CCB has been less widespread over the past decade, suggesting a need for previous theory to be revisited and updated where appropriate. Whilst the dated nature of the literature is accepted as a limitation of this

discussion, it is hoped that this chapter still captures current thinking on the subject.

3.2 Introducing Consumer Dissatisfaction and Complaint Behaviour

Consumer satisfaction is historically regarded as the very cornerstone of the marketing concept; it is acknowledged that any organisation will struggle to be profitable if it cannot satisfy its customers (Hill and Alexander, 2006). Bearden and Teel (1983) insisted that satisfaction is crucial to all parties in an economy; companies assume that satisfaction leads to improved levels of customer loyalty, whilst satisfaction is especially important for consumers when they have only limited resources available to make purchases. Here, consumer satisfaction is defined as “a measure of how your organisation's total product performs in relation to a set of customer expectations” (Hill and Alexander, 2006, p. 29).

However, it is estimated that as many as one in five purchases result in some form of consumer dissatisfaction (Andreasen and Best, 1977), be that down to product failure, service problems, unrealistic expectations or even customer misuse. Further, Thorelli (1982) pointed out that ‘satisfaction’ merely means an absence of ‘disappointment/dissatisfaction’, suggesting that marketers instead need to place more emphasis on understanding dissatisfaction and how this could affect their organisation.

Russo (1979) noted that much of the research into satisfaction and dissatisfaction derived impetus from the consumerist movement of 1965-75. By the 1980s it was clear to researchers and marketers that levels of dissatisfaction were continuing to rise across product categories; this was attributed to technological advances and the growth of independent bodies set up to protect consumers (Cavusgil and Kaynak, 1980), as well as increasingly competitive markets and heightened customer expectations (Barnes and Kelloway, 1980). Indeed, it has been suggested that dissatisfaction is even more likely in complex service delivery situations such as a university, which “frequently produce situations in which customer needs are misjudged or mishandled, resulting in customer dissatisfaction” (Bolfing, 1989, p. 5).

When dissatisfaction exists in any market system, Etzel and Silverman (1981) proposed that there are three stakeholders who each have a role to play in the process:

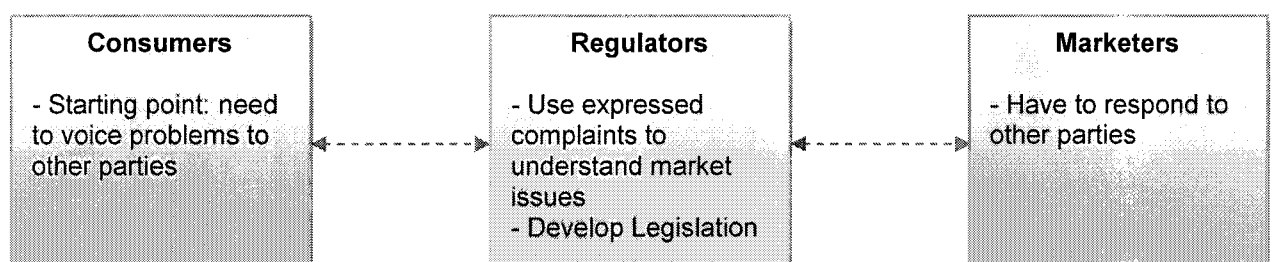


Figure 7: Stakeholders in Consumer Dissatisfaction (Adapted from Etzel and Silverman, 1981).

Whilst it is clear from the above that the emphasis is on marketers to deal with dissatisfactory incidents, Spalding and Marcus (1981) have argued

that consumers have an important role in the process, as they need to be aware of their rights and report unacceptable levels of product/service quality so that marketers have the opportunity to provide some form of redress. However, whilst attempting to solve consumer problems it is important that marketers realise that completely eliminating dissatisfaction is an unrealistic target:

Trying to erase consumer discontent may be like chasing the rainbow's end. There may not be a zero level of consumer dissatisfaction in any marketing system

(Arndt, Barksdale and Perreault Jnr., 1980, p. 71)

Similarly, Andreassen and Best (1977) had earlier suggested that improved business performance can actually increase dissatisfaction levels in the long-term, as customers become accustomed to high levels of service and consequently inflate their expectations to an unrealistic level.

As a result of rising dissatisfaction levels, researchers began to develop models to understand the dissatisfaction process, the most prominent of which were highlighted by Boote (1998) and are briefly introduced below:

1. Expectations – Disconfirmation Model: Here, consumers' pre-purchase expectations are of critical importance. If the performance of a product or service exceeds their initial expectations this results in satisfaction or even customer delight. However, if these expectations are not met this can lead to dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Erevelles and Leavitt,

1992). The challenge this presents to marketers is that of managing customer expectations – marketing communications need to convey the features of the product accurately as over-promising is likely to result in dissatisfaction.

2. Attribution Theory: Here, the consumers' response to a product or service failure depends on who is responsible. In some cases, a problem may clearly be the fault of a salesperson or other staff member, which is likely to elicit higher levels of dissatisfaction than if the problem was purely accidental or unavoidable (Boote, 1998).

3. Equity Model: This is a somewhat more subjective approach which states that consumers will consciously compare what they paid for a purchase with the benefits they received. When they deem this exchange to be unfair this will result in dissatisfaction (Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992). A key problem here is that individual perception of what is deemed a 'fair transaction' can differ markedly.

4. Perceived Performance: In some situations actual product performance is the only important factor in satisfaction judgments, rather than expectation levels. However, this model does not appear hugely appropriate to purchases that are characterised by higher levels of financial and psychological risk such as a university.

Of the above models, it would appear that the Expectations – Disconfirmation model is most appropriate for the education sector, where prospective students go through a significant process of information search and as such are likely to have a clear idea of what they expect from their choice of university. This model is also widely regarded as the most cited explanation of dissatisfaction in the literature (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg, 2006).

The inaugural academic conference on Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and CCB was held in the US in 1980, and provided the stimulus for much academic and practitioner research in the complaint behaviour field (Singh and Pandya, 1991). Almost two decades later, Boote (1998) compiled a comprehensive summary of CCB literature, and concluded that CCB research was still in its infancy as models are still being debated and applied to new product and service categories. Further, in an earlier review of the field Landon (1977) noted that theory on satisfaction/dissatisfaction was more advanced than CCB, with early CCB research focusing on two areas:

- Measuring the frequency of complaints;
- Establishing differences between those individuals who do and do not engage in complaining.

However, despite the ongoing debate of appropriate theoretical models, Russo (1979) observed that the field should continue to be relatively

pragmatic in nature; much of the work harbours the goals of reducing dissatisfaction or offering solutions to industry. Bearden and Teel (1980) commented that CCB research may be of particular interest to retailers who often bear the brunt of many consumer complaints. This is undertaken almost on behalf of the manufacturers, who risk not learning of such dissatisfaction owing to their increased distance from the final consumer.

An accepted definition of CCB has been offered by Singh (1988), which has been widely cited in subsequent studies in the field (Boote, 1998):

a set of multiple (behavioural and non-behavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode

(Singh, 1988, p. 93)

When conceptualising CCB, academics are keen to emphasise that the scope is broader than merely the practice of complaining directly to a store/manufacturer – it includes a wide variety of responses to dissatisfaction, all of which warrant investigation due to their potential impact on organisations. This includes actions such as spreading negative word of mouth and contacting the media, as well as non-behavioural responses such as changing attitudes about a product or organisation. As Halstead and Droga summarised “Conceptualising CCB as only complaints directed to a seller or third party is generally viewed as overly-restrictive” (1991, p. 210).

Goodwin and Ross (1990) argue that society as a whole has taught us to expect retribution after harm. Consequently, in the event of a complaint:

consumers will evaluate the fairness of a transaction on the basis of whether they perceive the compensation as adequate and appropriate

(Goodwin and Ross, 1990, p. 40)

This may or may not result in dissatisfied consumers engaging in one of the many forms of CCB discussed in Section 3.4.

Historically, researchers and marketers alike have simply assumed that the concepts of dissatisfaction and CCB are clearly intertwined (Halstead and Page, 1992). Similarly, Singh (1988) had previously commented that “without perceptions of dissatisfaction, consumers’ responses cannot qualify as CCB” (p. 94). However, in time an increasing number of academics began to question this previously assumed link: Blodgett and Granbois (1992) instead viewed dissatisfaction as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of complaining behaviour to occur (with the exception of ‘false’ complaints from bogus consumers).

Day (1984) was among the earliest researchers to question the link between dissatisfaction and CCB, claiming that intensity of dissatisfaction only accounted for 15% of the variance in CCB. He argued that there was a plethora of other situational factors that were more likely to explain an individual’s complaint behaviour with greater accuracy (such factors are

explored further in Sections 3.5 and 3.6). Equally, Singh and Howell (1985) felt that the relationship between dissatisfaction and CCB may be weaker than first thought, and is most likely mediated by some other variables:

This implies that dissatisfaction is an emotional state which will under some circumstances motivate consumers to engage in a complaining/non-complaining decision process

(Singh and Howell, 1985, p. 42)

Singh and Pandya (1991) later suggested that because the link between dissatisfaction and CCB was not as strong as first predicted, this may mean that not all unhappy customers engage in complaining behaviour, resulting in what they call 'latent dissatisfaction'. This concept will be explored further in Section 3.4.

From the above, it appears that dissatisfaction alone is not sufficient to result in CCB, however Bearden and Teel (1983) felt that despite this dissatisfaction is still "recognised as a primary determinant of legitimate customer complaints" (p. 22).

As has already been suggested by Arndt, Barksdale and Perreault Jnr. (1980), some level of consumer complaints are inevitable regardless of business performance. Spalding and Marcus (1981) argued that this was particularly true for large service organisations – they cited the example of the US postal service, who despite boasting a 99% efficiency level still

recorded three million mistakes every day due to delays or lost mail.

Richins (1982) commented that many organisations have misguided views on complaints: although they may be troublesome in the short-term they offer the opportunity to recover the situation and satisfy the customer. In reality, marketers should be more afraid of 'non-complainers' who will still cause damage to an organisation through negative word of mouth despite not contacting them directly.

A key environmental change that has impacted upon how consumers react to dissatisfactory incidents is the Internet. As well as being able to contact organisations online, consumers are now able to share their experiences with the general public via forums and other interactive features. In the US, www.complaints.com was independently launched in 2000 to allow consumers to voice their grievances in a public forum. Whilst the primary benefit is for consumers to learn of poor performing organisations, the information can also be made available to marketers to help understand their own weaknesses.

Subsequently, a website named www.customerssuck.com was developed in order for front-line personnel, who are most often on the receiving end of complaints, to vent their frustration with furious consumers. Such websites illustrate that complaining is a prevalent part of modern society, as Robinson somewhat ironically observed:

Complaining is a basic human activity. People complain about the weather, their health, their jobs, their neighbours, and even about people who complain too much

(Robinson, 1978, p. 48)

3.3 Why do Consumers Complain?

Once organisations accept that some level of complaints is inevitable, a key challenge is understanding what causes consumers to complain. In general, Fornell and Westbrook (1979) felt that complaining served an over-arching purpose:

For the consumer, complaining is a means of making one's feelings known when unfair selling practices are encountered, when disappointment with a product arises, and when disapproval of business conduct more generally occurs

(Fornell and Westbrook, 1979, p. 105)

Jacoby and Jaccards' (1981) research revealed that complaints are likely to come from four different groups of people, who vary in both their usage of the product and level of satisfaction:

Dissatisfied users of the product: This is the most obvious group that are likely to complain. These individuals have endured a negative experience with an organisation and complain to gain some form of redress. For example, Day and Ash (1979) conducted a study of dissatisfaction with durable products and found that the most cited reasons for complaints were poor quality of materials and poor

workmanship. Further, they discovered that the highest levels of dissatisfaction existed in the automotive sector. More recent research suggests that the automotive industry still suffers from similar problems: Fisher, Garrett, Arnold and Ferris (1999) found that 40% of car dealerships did not even offer any form of resolution to complaining customers.

Satisfied users of the product: Despite not having a genuine problem with their purchase, this group may complain because of concerns over future performance, a general negative attitude to the organisation or perhaps a desire to make financial gains. For instance, in their study of carpet purchasers, Halstead and Page (1992) found high levels of complaints among satisfied customers, possibly because of the high product value and vested interest in the product. Despite this, Day (1984) believed that fraudulent complaining is such a rare phenomenon that it does not warrant being included in a comprehensive model of CCB.

Non-users of the product: This group may include those that have purchased a product as a gift for someone else, only to find it was not of a suitable standard. Such complainers are less likely to have a full understanding of the product fault and as such may struggle to effectively convey this dissatisfaction to an organisation.

Non-purchasers of the product: This may include social or consumer groups who feel an organisation is not acting in the best interests of

individuals, communities or even the environment. Such groups are likely to generate negative publicity for an organisation through the media.

As will be discussed later in the chapter, there remains a significant proportion of the population who will not complain regardless of their level of dissatisfaction. Indeed, Andreassen and Best (1977) reported that as many as 60% of consumers will do nothing about their dissatisfaction, a finding which has led academics to investigate the key barriers to complaining. In an early study, Bearden and Teel (1980) conducted a survey of dissatisfied consumers across product categories and discovered that people generally do not complain because of:

- Lack of suitable complaint channels (for example, phone lines or available staff);
- Lack of confidence;
- Perceptions of risk (for example, a feeling that the complaint may not be successful and thus be viewed as a waste of time and effort);
- Negative feelings about complaining in general.

These findings have been replicated to some extent in other studies. Day and Ash (1979) also found that the amount of time and effort needed to complain was deemed excessive. They also found that consumers generally did not believe that complaining was a worthwhile activity as they had limited chances of success (also suggested by Dolinsky, 1994).

However, it may be that such a perception is now outdated, given that organisations have seemingly become more open to receiving negative consumer feedback. Dolinsky (1994) also suggested that consumers lack knowledge of how to complain, be it directly to the seller or to a mediating third party. This will be discussed in relation to cultural issues in Section 3.6.

In a study conducted in Mainland China, Le Claire (1993) found that prominent reasons for not complaining were 'just bad luck' and 'embarrassment', quoted by 23% and 18% of respondents respectively. This suggests that the reasons for not complaining may be culturally bound, a concept explored further in Section 3.6. Related to this, Dolinsky (1994) also summarised that:

Other possible explanations include the emotional difficulty which individuals encounter when complaining and the cultural inappropriateness of doing so

(Dolinsky, 1994, p. 29)

This may prove to be a particularly pertinent issue for international students in HE, where complaining may involve confronting and resolving problems with individuals from alternative cultures.

In summary, it is clear that the decision as to whether a person complains is significant in their repurchase intentions, and if they do file a complaint the organisation's response to this is equally critical

(Halstead and Page, 1992). As will be discussed further in Section 3.7, marketers are well advised to ensure that suitable channels are available for consumers to voice their concerns, and that all complaints are dealt with in a timely and professional manner (Richins, 1982).

3.4 Models of CCB

In terms of CCB theory, it would appear logical to assume that researchers would focus on developing a comprehensive schema of CCB responses (i.e. understanding what potential responses are available to a dissatisfied consumer). However, Broadbridge and Marshall (1995) noted that “only a few researchers have offered specific models for dissatisfaction responses” (p. 10). In this discussion, CCB responses are defined as:

a somewhat diverse but not mutually exclusive group of responses as consumers may proceed in sequential fashion from simple to more involved complaining behaviours depending on the results sought

(Hernandez and Fugate, 2004, p. 153)

The above quote suggests that when engaging in CCB responses, consumers may follow a ‘hierarchy of complaints’ (Rogers, Ross and Williams, 1992), starting with a response that requires relatively little effort (such as spreading negative word of mouth) and eventually progressing towards more high involvement responses (writing a formal letter of complaint). Whilst many consumers may follow such a sequential path, it

should be noted that in reality consumers can engage in any combination of CCB responses (Day and Bodur, 1978), the choice of which will depend on numerous situational and individual factors (see Sections 3.5 and 3.6).

Writing in the 1980s, when attempts at developing models of CCB were relatively rare, Singh and Howell (1985) pointed out that any schema needs to meet four key criteria:

- Adequately specify the phenomenon;
- Adequately specify the criterion of classification;
- Provide categories that are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive;
- Be useful (to both researchers and marketers).

In the following discussion, a number of competing models of CCB responses will be outlined. Throughout this discussion it becomes apparent that any form of CCB response can prove to be detrimental to an organisation, be it a simple switch to a competing brand or high-profile legal action resulting in significant payouts and negative publicity (Day and Bodur, 1978; Slama and Williams, 1991).

The earliest documented attempt to understand responses to dissatisfactory incidents was not actually developed in the consumer behaviour field. Albert Hirschmans' 1970 book entitled '*Exit, Voice and Loyalty*' was born out of an interest in economic and political systems, and

understanding how members of such systems react to declining performance levels. Therein, he argued that organisations are not immune to deteriorating performance, be it due to changing market conditions or human error. In such situations, stakeholders of an organisation engage in one of a number of responses:

- 1) **Exit:** Employees or members effectively leave an organisation and possibly join other competing groups. This leads management to become aware of a problem through data such as labour turnover and acts as a catalyst for them to respond. In a consumer sense, this would involve a dissatisfied customer boycotting a product/organisation and instead opting for the products and services of an alternative supplier.
- 2) **Voice:** Here, employees decide to vent their dissatisfaction to management “or through general protest addressed to anyone who cares to listen” (Hirschman, 1970, p.4). This also causes management to react to feedback in what can be a confrontational atmosphere. For consumers, this option covers the activities of complaining directly to a seller/marketer or discussing the experience with other consumers or personal contacts.
- 3) **Loyalty:** Should an individual hold a positive emotional bond with an organisation, they may be more likely to ignore or underplay the importance of declining performance and remain in their current

position. It can be argued that whilst increased loyalty leads individuals to voice their dissatisfaction, a person showing limited loyalty is more likely to withdraw their membership: “loyalty holds exit at bay and activates voice” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 78). This can easily be applied to a marketing scenario, where a loyal consumer may be more likely to inform marketers of problems informally as opposed to switching suppliers.

Despite not being directly applied to the CCB field, the work of Hirschman has been acknowledged as a pivotal point in the development of more recent theory (Boote, 1998). However, it remains a considerable distance from offering a comprehensive schema for CCB as the three options offered do not constitute an exhaustive list of responses to dissatisfaction.

From here, CCB researchers began to develop more detailed models of the CCB process. Day and Landon (1977) produced a three-level hierarchy which can be seen in Figure 8. Here, the first level distinguishes between behavioural (Take Action) and non-behavioural responses, recognising that not all consumers will act upon feelings of dissatisfaction. From here, the authors split what Hirschman (1970) defined as ‘Voice’ into two sub-headings: ‘Public’ and ‘Private’. For the first time, academics acknowledged that voicing dissatisfaction can take alternative forms: whilst ‘Public’ complaining involves approaching individuals/organisations outside of one’s social circle, ‘Private’ complaining involves activities that are not directly visible to the marketer. Ngai et al (2007) likened such

private complaining to gossip, as it is likely to spread quickly and is more likely to be remembered by consumers than more official sources of information. The third and final level outlines specific actions, ranging from boycotting a product ('Exit' in Hirschmans' [1970] schema) to taking legal action.

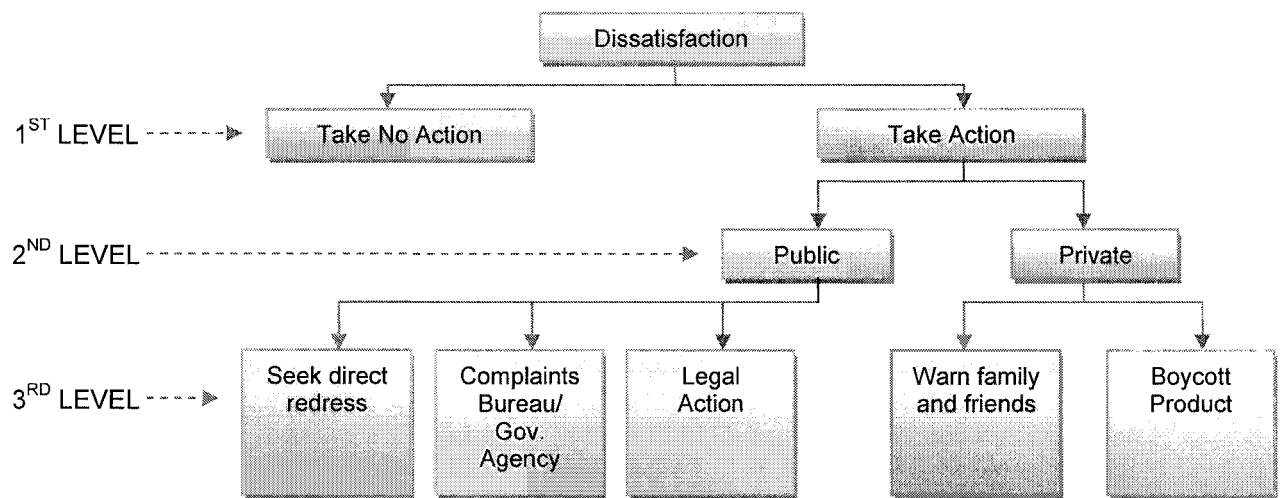


Figure 8: Three-level hierarchical schema of CCB (Day and Landon, 1977, p. 428).

The above figure clearly offers a more detailed review of CCB responses: it distinguishes between public and private complaining and offers specific actions available to a consumer, which helps marketers understand how their dissatisfied consumers may react. However a key shortcoming is the lack of detail surrounding the 'Take No Action' element of the first level (or 'latent dissatisfaction' – Singh and Pandya, 1991), where issues such as attitude change could also be included to acknowledge that consumers may 'forgive, but not forget'. Also, it could also be argued that the public complaining activities require further dissection to recognise the different

types of organisations involved (e.g. complaining direct to seller as opposed to complaints bureaux, legal bodies etc.).

Interestingly, Hawkins, Best and Coney (1998) offered a very similar framework for understanding CCB, but it differed slightly in that that even if an individual took 'No Action', this would inevitably lead to the consumer developing a less favourable attitude about the product or organisation. Although this does recognise that consumers may change their viewpoint in the event of dissatisfaction, such an assumption may prove to be untrue if, for example, the dissatisfaction is extremely rare or deemed unimportant. This perhaps suggests that this model was designed to consider purchases that are lower involvement than choosing a university.

Singh (1988) attempted to develop a suitable model of CCB responses loosely based on the original work of Hirschman (1970). At first glance, his model (Figure 9 below) appears to lack the detail offered by Day and Landon (1977); however, the key contribution of this framework concerned different channels of complaining. 'Public' actions were divided into 'Voice' and 'Third Party'; the former involves directly contacting the organisation who caused the dissatisfaction, whilst the latter occurs when an external body (possibly an industry regulator or watchdog) becomes involved and acts as a mediator in the process. This distinction appears critical given that Third Parties may only be used in more serious cases of dissatisfaction (Singh and Pandya, 1991).

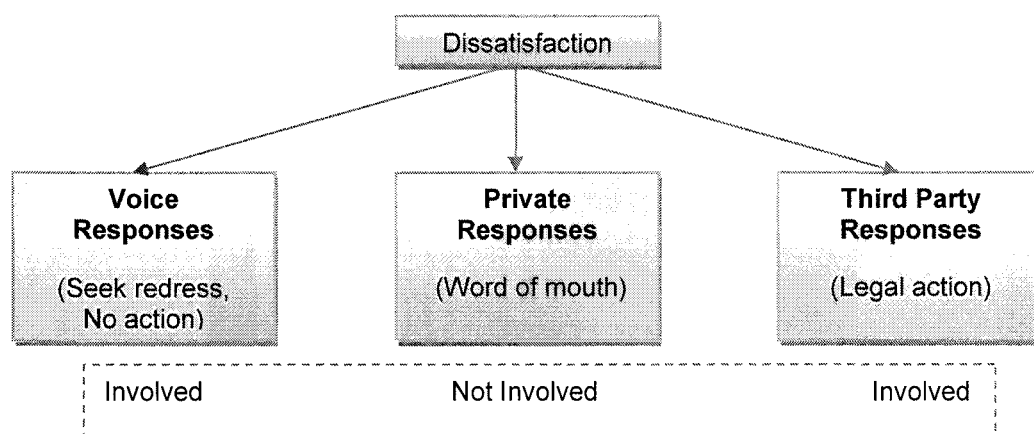


Figure 9: Responses to Dissatisfaction (Singh, 1988, p. 101)

Although Singh (1988) pointed out that the model was not intended to be definitive, and should be challenged through empirical testing, this did not stop many writers viewing this as the most comprehensive attempt at understanding CCB to date: Raven and Foxman (1994) commented that the model “appears to significantly improve on previous taxonomies” (p. 237).

However, the model has been open to criticism from other scholars. Whilst it benefits from introducing a ‘Third Party’ option, Boote (1998) commented that the placement of ‘No action’ as a ‘Voice’ response was illogical: it would appear that a ‘non-behavioural’ section is missing from the schema. Further, the model also fails to consider the option of simply switching to an alternative brand, an increasingly likely outcome given the increasing levels of competition in many sectors. However, Singh’s (1988) decision not to include ‘No Action’ as a separate response was advocated by Kincade, Giddings and Chen-Yu (1998), who felt that regardless of the

exact consumer reaction, dissatisfaction will always have a negative effect.

It is interesting to note that a later (and more simplistic) schema offered by Rogers, Ross and Williams (1992) took into account both criticisms of Singh's (1988) attempt to produce a five-point framework. Although the authors depicted the model below as following a sequential pattern from minor to major CCB responses, they were keen to ensure this was not utilised as a scale, as in reality any combination of these responses can be used (Day and Ash, 1979). The simplicity of this approach clearly appealed to other scholars, with Huang (1994) using this framework in a later study of cross-cultural CCB. However, the simplicity of the model does lead to some problems when testing the model empirically: for example, more clarity is needed around the option of 'Changing Future Behaviour', as this could involve a switch in brand, manufacturer or even product category.

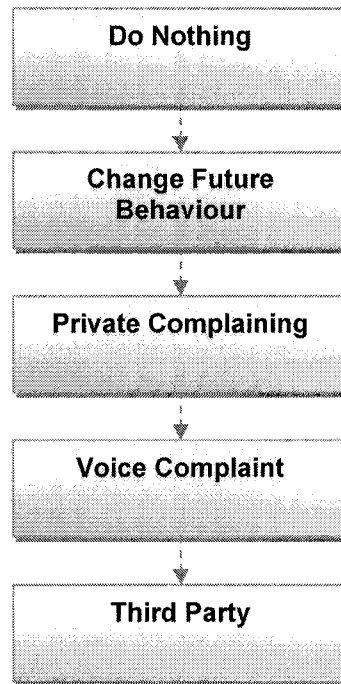


Figure 10: Five-Point Schema of CCB (Rogers, Ross and Williams, 1992, p. 84)

The most recent attempts at understanding CCB responses have been offered in articles that have provided a review and critique of the existing CCB literature. Boote (1998) attempted to characterise CCB responses based on two criteria. Firstly, he distinguished between 'Primary' and 'Secondary' CCB responses: Primary responses are those utilised before a dissatisfied consumer has had first contact with an organisation, whilst secondary responses occur after this contact. This is known as the 'Redress Boundary', and recognises that a consumer's long-term behaviour may well be mediated by a company's response to their complaint – known as 'perceived justice' (Blodgett and Tax, 1993).

The second criterion used is lifted from Singh's (1988) schema, whereby 'Uninvolved' actions do not involve the organisation responsible for the

dissatisfaction, whilst 'involved' responses are directed towards them. This results in the following matrix (Table 11), and is a useful approach as it illustrates that consumers may complain to different channels in a sequential manner: for example, an unsuccessful complaint to a company may result in negative word of mouth at a later date:

	Uninvolved	Involved
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exit brand/product category - Private negative word of mouth - No action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary voiced complaint
REDRESS BOUNDARY		
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post-redress exit behaviour (brand, product, category, retailer, manufacturer) - Avoidance - Grudge holding - Post-redress negative word of mouth - Public negative word of mouth - Third party Action - No further Action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secondary voiced complaint - Retaliation

Table 11: Two-Factor Taxonomy of CCB (Boote, 1998, p. 145)

Another benefit of Boote's (1998) taxonomy is its inclusion of a number of responses that were not previously acknowledged elsewhere: avoidance, grudge-holding and retaliation. These additional behaviours were investigated by Huefner and Hunt, who felt that "some consumer responses to dissatisfaction clearly do not best fit Hirschman's voice/exit/loyalty model" (2000, p. 62). Retaliation is viewed as an aggressive means of getting even (i.e. redressing the balance after the company has hurt the consumer). This can take five forms: creating costs

for an organisation (e.g. false orders), vandalism/trashing, stealing, excessive negative word of mouth and violence. Huefner and Hunt (2000) found that these responses were more frequent than previously envisaged, with 38% of their sample respondents previously engaging in one of these behaviours. Avoidance and grudge-holding can be viewed as longer-term forms of exit; with avoidance the consumer tries to stay clear from the brand/manufacture but may return in the future, whilst grudge-holding involves a negative perception of an organisation that is unlikely to ever change.

Whilst these additional responses have been empirically proven to be relevant in understanding CCB, it remains questionable whether such responses are feasible in a university context. Retaliations such as violence or vandalism appear relatively unfeasible given this would also be of detriment to the student's academic career, whilst avoidance lacks applicability as most students will not return to university after graduation (although many HE institutions are now attempting to attract financial donations from alumni).

Possibly the most comprehensive attempt at understanding CCB responses evident in the literature was developed by Crie (2003), who compiled a review of existing work in the field and in doing so brought together positive elements from various models. Here, non-behavioural responses are given greater attention, as it considers that changing attitudes may or may not lead to repeat purchase. The model also

considers the different strains of 'public' complaining and illustrates that both boycotting and negative word of mouth are 'invisible' from the marketers' perspective:

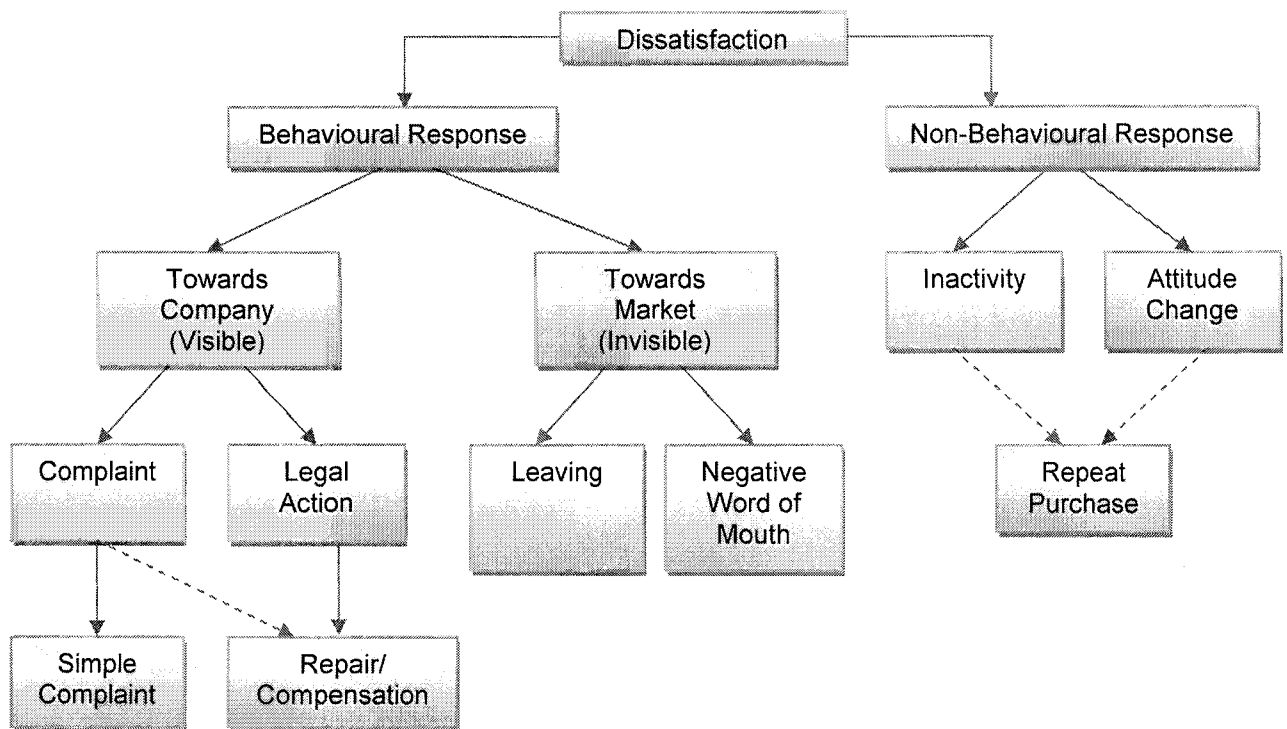


Figure 11: Comprehensive Taxonomy of CCB (Crie, 2003, p. 63).

Reviewing the range of CCB models that have been offered in this section, it is obvious that progress has been made over time as researchers have developed an appreciation of the range of CCB responses available to consumers. However, even the most recent and apparently all-encompassing frameworks share a number of potential pitfalls:

Suitability for service-based scenarios: Given that the vast majority of research has been conducted in either FMCG or durable product areas, it

is inevitable that the models are designed for such purchases. Further, the models offered appear to be more applicable to 'one-off' purchases as opposed to the many services that are offered over longer-term periods (such as HE). The models offered by Day and Landon (1977) and Crie (2003) both see exit/boycott as a private response, but in reality if a service contract exists between consumer and organisation the process of withdrawing becomes a more public affair, as the consumer will need to contact the organisation and formally terminate the agreement and any connected payment plans.

Prevalence of the Internet: Even the most recent models reviewed have failed to factor in the concept of online complaining as a valid CCB response. Unfortunately for organisations, the sheer scope of the Internet means that online complaining often extends beyond merely emailing the organisation in question: consumers' frustrations are often made available to others via public forums:

*Before the Internet, the aim of the game was one-to-one communication between the consumer and the business....
With the Internet, however, the game is now played out in the open and on a broader communication continuum*

(Gao, 2005, p. 91)

A key facet of online complaining is that consumers no longer have to endure what is often an awkward face-to-face confrontation when complaining direct to an organisation: instead they can take the time to articulate their complaint carefully and await a response. This led Liu and

McClure (2001) to suggest that the 'Public' and 'Private' complaint categories are beginning to intertwine, rendering many previous taxonomies outdated. Another relevant issue in online CCB is the lack of personal contact that may complicate the complaint resolution process (Cho, Im, Hiltz and Fjermestad, 2002). This may be particularly crucial when dealing with collectivist cultures who value closer, personal relationships (Yau, 1988: see Section 3.6).

From this, it would appear that any exhaustive conceptualisation of CCB would need to at least consider the Internet as a new and alternative means of voicing dissatisfaction. As will be discussed later, this is particularly critical in HE, where email is often the preferred means of contact between students and university staff,

Applicability of existing models to HE context: As has been mentioned, many of the above illustrated models were developed from research into product-based sectors, and as such fail to capture the additional complexities evident in a long-term service such as HE. For example, the range of third party bodies who can help with complaints expands to include other internal entities such as Student Unions and Student Services Departments. Equally, the act of negative word of mouth may take a different form if talking to a fellow student or a family member back in the student's home country.

Building on the above discussion, a model of CCB tailored to the HE sector is proposed after a discussion of Student Complaint Behaviour in Section 3.9.1.

3.4.1 Most Common Responses to Dissatisfaction

With such a wide range of potential responses to dissatisfaction available, researchers have also attempted to understand which of these responses are most commonly utilised by consumers. In the past many organisations have been lured into believing that their in-house complaint records accurately reflect dissatisfaction levels, but Day, Grabicke, Schaetzle and Staubach (1981) have warned that “Complaint statistics grossly understate the frequency of dissatisfaction” (p. 86). This is made all the more worrying given the general agreement that of all potential responses, receiving a complaint directly is by far the most favourable outcome for marketers as it offers the opportunity to recover the situation (Richard and Adrian, 1995).

In general, the number of consumers who complain publicly has risen in recent decades; this has been attributed largely to the consumerism movement that swept from North America into Europe (Day and Bodur, 1978). As was initially suggested by Hirschman (1970), a consumer may only choose to provide feedback if they feel some level of loyalty to an organisation:

A certain amount of compassion is necessary for a customer to voice a complaint rather than simply exit to a competitor

(Mattson, Lemmink and McColl, 2004, p. 944)

However, there have been contrasting opinions on the actual proportion of consumers who are prepared to publicly complain in the event of dissatisfaction: Day and Bodur (1978) found that 26.8% of dissatisfied respondents had approached the seller, although in the majority of cases this was for a simple refund or replacement as opposed to a formal written complaint. Similarly, Andreasen (1977) found that around 30% of dissatisfied consumers complained publicly. Hernandez and Fugate (2004) found that even in the case of relatively expensive electrical items, complaining remained one of the least likely responses. In contrast, the same authors found private complaint behaviours, such as spreading negative word of mouth, to be the most common response to dissatisfaction. Day and Ash (1979) found in their study of dissatisfaction with durable products that there was an even split between private and public behaviours, further demonstrating that company figures on complaints may be hugely misleading.

The general consensus in the literature is that a significant proportion of dissatisfied consumers still do not act upon their dissatisfaction, despite the rise in consumer awareness across the Western world. Day and Bodur (1978) found that 21.8% did nothing, something they attributed to “either a defeatist attitude or a pessimistic appraisal of the chance for successfully obtaining redress” (p. 265). Andreasen and Best (1977) published

research indicating that up to 60% of dissatisfied consumers take no action, which may be attributed to post-purchase panic and a lack of clarity as to who is to blame. The extent of this non-activity has left many academics somewhat perplexed:

The frequency with which consumers report they did nothing at all after being very upset with a consumption experience is startling

(Day and Ash, 1979, p. 97)

Throughout this, it is crucial to note the role of time in the CCB process. Crie (2003) noted that intentions may change due to a variety of factors. In general, time is envisaged to decrease a consumer's propensity to complain, possibly due to a change in mood. It is also crucial to note that because consumers will engage in multiple responses (Day and Bodur [1978] found that the average consumer engages in two to three different CCB's) CCB is best viewed as a series of events as opposed to a one-off incident (Langmeyer and Langmeyer, 1978).

It would be of particular interest to educational managers to understand which CCB responses are most frequently utilised amongst the student body. For example, discovering that students engage in private behaviours could help to explain recruitment patterns or even results from satisfaction surveys. As will be considered in Section 3.9, this is an area that has not received a great deal of attention in the literature.

3.5 Factors Affecting CCB Responses

With such a diverse range of responses available to dissatisfied consumers, an understanding of which behaviours are most likely to be utilised in various situations would be of particular use to marketers. Whilst the earliest efforts in CCB research were focused on establishing usable CCB models (as discussed in Section 3.4), more recently attention has turned towards what Boote (1998) has termed 'Triggers of Dissatisfaction': understanding what factors cause consumers to engage in particular responses.

There have been numerous attempts in the literature to develop an exhaustive list of these triggers, a summary of which is provided in Table 12. A brief scan of these attempts shows a relatively high level of consistency: all authors refer to what can be termed 'situational' factors, those issues relevant to the purchase that has caused the dissatisfaction. There are also high levels of agreement on the importance of issues such as individual factors (e.g. personality and attitudes towards complaining) and the concept of attribution (identifying who is blame for the dissatisfaction). The fact that these trigger 'lists' have remained stable over time suggests that CCB researchers are somewhere near a full appreciation of factors influencing responses to dissatisfaction.

Author	Date	Triggers/Antecedents of Dissatisfaction
Robinson	1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem Situation: Time, effort, money, product cost, rate of replacement, product complexity, inconvenience, frequency of occurrence, blame attribution. - Consumer Awareness of Recourse: Information available, powerlessness. - Personality Characteristics: Dogmatism, internal-external locus of control, self-confidence, powerlessness, social situation and political efficacy. - Attitudes towards complaining.
Jacoby and Jaccard	1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing Channel Factors: Reputation, ease of access, willingness to provide redress, perception of firms' intentions. - Consumer Variables: Personality, attitudes, motives, consumer value of time, consumers' information level. - Situational Factors: Situation importance, social climate.
Day	1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What features/issues caused dissatisfaction? - Who do you blame? - What can they do about it? - What can we do to elicit response? - Cost of actions we can take? - What can we gain? - Comparison of benefits and costs.
Bolting	1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumer Characteristics: Demographic or personality. - Consumption Experience: Situational variables. - Perceptions of the redress environment.
Broadbridge and Marshall	1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumer related factors. - Influence of marketers. - Circumstantial or environmental factors.

Table 12: Proposed Triggers of Dissatisfaction (Various)

Whilst the above lists all have their merits, perhaps the most exhaustive collection of relevant factors is offered by Boote (1998) who segmented these triggers into eight categories as illustrated in Figure 12. This attempt contains many of the factors suggested elsewhere but is distinctive in its inclusion of culture as a key determinant of CCB, something that is particularly germane to this study. This eight-category structure will be

used to frame the following discussion, with particular emphasis on cultural issues in Section 3.6.

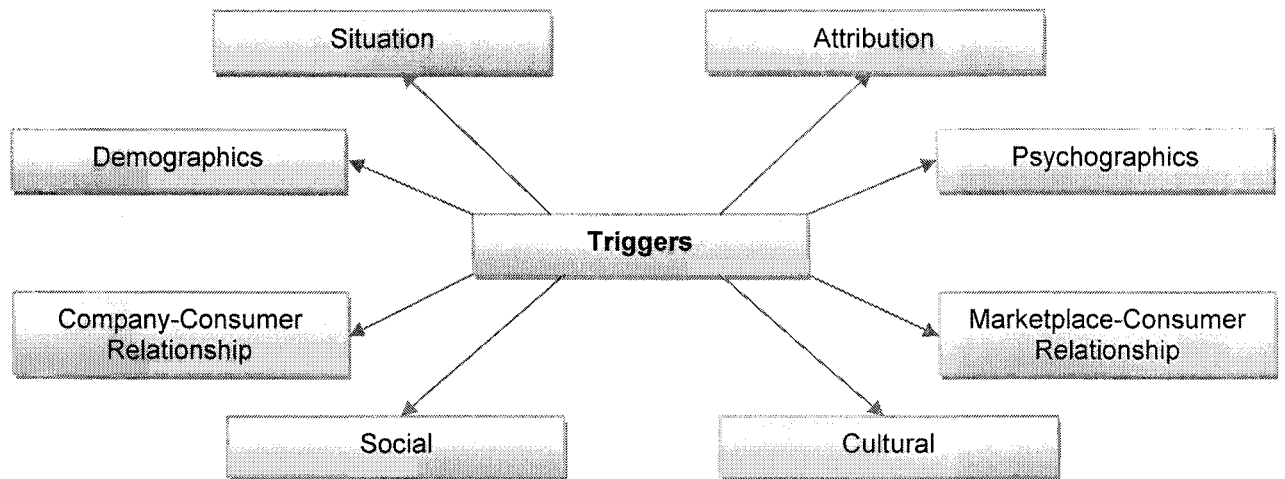


Figure 12: Triggers of Dissatisfaction (Boote, 1998, p. 145)

3.5.1 Situational Factors

Central to the CCB process are the specific circumstances of the purchase situation. Should a purchase cause dissatisfaction (be it immediately or over a longer period of time), the consumer is likely to consider issues such as the level of dissatisfaction felt, importance of the purchase, the assumed costs and benefits of complaining and previous performance of the product or organisation (Landon, 1977; Hernandez and Fugate, 2004).

A key study in this area was conducted by Singh and Pandya (1991) who investigated dissatisfaction in the financial services sector. Their results suggested the existence of what they coined the 'Threshold Effect', which dictated that the intensity of dissatisfaction felt by the consumer was

central to their choice of response. Whilst relatively minor problems are likely to result in low-effort responses, it appears logical that more extreme issues could result in more drastic action:

- **Low Dissatisfaction:** Low-effort CCB, such as word of mouth or possibly exit;
- **Medium Dissatisfaction:** Some effort expended to seek redress (for example, phoning the organisation);
- **High Dissatisfaction:** A combination of private, public and third party complaining.

The authors also noted that what constitutes the 'threshold' may vary across product and service categories. This work backed the previous suggestion by Langmeyer and Langmeyer (1978) that level of consumer involvement was a crucial issue, with minor instances of dissatisfaction resulting in a 'forget it, shop elsewhere' response.

On a similar level, the actual importance and financial costs associated with the purchase are also thought to be decisive factors. Broadbridge and Marshall (1995) concluded that public action is more likely for high value items: given the changing financial structure of HE, studying at university is an increasingly costly option and consequently may lead to increased numbers of complaints. Another issue that appears particularly relevant to the HE sector is that of perceived importance; Bolfing (1989) found that propensity to complain publicly was higher when the perceived importance

of the problem is high. To students, educational achievement is a critical issue as it has a long-term impact upon their careers, and any dissatisfactory experiences that may compromise their grades may be treated very seriously.

All of the above leads to the idea of a hierarchy of consumer involvement, where the effort put into voicing dissatisfaction increases with the cost (financial, psychological or physiological – Bolting, 1989), importance and severity of the problem. Hernandez and Fugate (2004) found that an exception to this rule appeared to be third party complaining, which was an uncommon response regardless of the situation. However, Warren and Gilbert (1993) concluded that consumers are more likely to experience problems with services as opposed to products, possibly owing to the unpredictable human element involved in service delivery.

It would appear that situational factors can explain a significant amount of variance in the use of the various responses to dissatisfaction, as can be summarised by the following comment:

It appears to us that whether a consumer talks back to business depends not so much on who he or she is as on what the purchase or the problem is

(Andreasen and Best, 1977, p. 98)

3.5.2 Attribution

The issue of who is to blame for the dissatisfaction (and indeed whether this was malicious or purely accidental) is one that has received a smaller amount of attention in the literature, and is in some cases simply encompassed within situational factors (Robinson, 1978). However Blodgett and Granbois (1992) still see attribution as a relevant issue for consumers when responding to dissatisfaction. An interesting study in this area was undertaken by Folkes (1984), who concluded that if the product/service problem is particularly complex then the consumer may not be able to identify who is to blame. In these instances, the consumer is more likely to contact the organisation for additional help and support as opposed to lodging a complaint. This may be a relevant factor in the HE sector, where issues surrounding academic judgment may prove difficult to resolve and may instead result in a student seeking further guidance or feedback.

3.5.3 Demographics

An obvious area of early interest for academics was investigating whether the act of complaining could be explained by demographic factors such as age, gender and socio-economic standing. Indeed, Barnes and Kelloway (1980) commented that too many previous studies had searched for links between CCBs and demographics, implying that other non-demographic variables required further investigation.

Possibly the most critical issue in terms of complaining in the HE sector is that of education level, with widespread agreement that an individual's propensity to complain publicly increases with heightened qualifications. In an early investigation of consumers who wrote complaint letters, Zaichowsky and Liefeld (1977) concluded that:

Perhaps the most noteworthy factor of complaint letter writing was education. Once the education is achieved, the knowledge of where, when, and how to write letters of complaint is achieved

(Zaichowsky and Liefeld, 1977, p. 127)

A more recent study by Heung and Lam (2003) came to a similar conclusion, which adds weight to the suggestion made by Barnes and Kelloway (1980) that the link between education and CCB is a consistent one. The idea that those with higher education have the confidence, communication skills and knowledge to publicly complain may prove to be a positive factor for educational managers, as receiving a complaint directly is generally accepted as the ideal form of CCB from the marketers' perspective (Richard and Adrian, 1995).

Related to education levels, researchers have also suggested that higher socio-economic groups tend to engage in more public and third party responses (Friedmann, 1974; Barnes and Kelloway, 1980). The latter study also reported that wealthier groups shared a belief that complaining was indeed a worthwhile activity. However, Andreassen and Best have

refuted the link, claiming that “our early research suggests that socioeconomic status is not a good predictor of behaviour” (1977, p. 98).

Aside from education and social groupings, studies have revealed that other demographic variables are not significantly linked to CCB. Bolting (1989) found that although minimal differences existed between men and women, demographics were largely irrelevant in CCB. Heung and Lam (2003) discovered that females were slightly more likely to complain than their male counterparts, however they arrived at a more rigid conclusion in terms of age; their study of hotel goers found that the 25-44 age group were most likely to complain.

3.5.4 Personality

Despite many researchers’ assumptions that complaint behaviours are strongly related to personality, this remains an area where a definitive link has yet to be empirically established. Indeed, Landon had speculated as early as 1977 that personality may only play an important role as a mediating variable.

Zaichowsky and Liefeld (1977) were amongst the first to investigate if there were personality differences between complainers and non-complainers. They surveyed 100 complaint letter writers and 100 non-complainers using a Sixteen Factor Personality Questionnaire, but concluded that the instrument could only classify complainers in 65% of

occasions as opposed to 50% by chance, a far from conclusive outcome. Later, Grabicke, Schaetzle and Staubach (1981) found that only 10-19% of the variance in CCB could be attributed to personality, although they suggested this may be partially due to a lack of appropriate personality instruments.

More specifically, Fornell and Westbrook (1979) investigated the constructs of aggressiveness and assertiveness. They believed that aggression is a natural result of frustration, and assertiveness refers to “standing up for one’s legitimate rights without violating the rights of others” (p.106). Whereas an assertive person thinks before acting, an aggressive person experiences the opposite. Their results concluded that those displaying low aggressiveness and assertiveness tended to use low-level (private) responses, but surprisingly respondents reporting high levels of aggression and assertiveness did not necessarily engage in public behaviours. However, in a later study Bolting (1989) discovered that assertiveness and self-confidence were more evident in ‘complainers’ than ‘non-complainers’. It appears logical that an individual’s self-confidence will be relevant in his/her decision to publicly complain. Chelminski and Coulter (2004) used a ‘Marketplace Interface’ scale which is designed to measure a consumer’s propensity to stand up for themselves when dissatisfied and concluded that self-confidence is a more important trigger than cultural background (see Section 3.6).

An area where more concrete correlations have been identified concerns personal values and emotions. Rogers, Ross and Williams (1992) used a vignette questioning approach and concluded that for females, the values of freedom and family security (ensuring family members are not disadvantaged by the dissatisfactory experience) were relevant to CCB. For males, the values of wisdom and salvation were found to be more relevant. Elsewhere, a study conducted by Mattson, Lemmink and McColl (2004) unsurprisingly established that in order for a consumer to lodge an official complaint the consumer will have felt emotions such as anger, hate, disgust and contempt. This seems to fit in with the work of Singh and Pandya (1991) which implies that formal complaints are likely to arise in more serious situations.

3.5.5 The Company–Consumer Relationship

According to Boote (1998) the key issues here are concerned with consumer loyalty (the extent to which they hold a positive attitude towards the organisation) and also the size of the company. It is generally recognised that larger organisations are more difficult to interact with, owing to their complex structures, large numbers of staff and blurred lines of communication between consumers and management (Heung and Lam, 2003). Related to this idea, Blodgett (1994) suggested that whether or not a consumer chooses to complain depends largely on the perceived chances of a successful outcome. Therefore it is important for all

organisations to demonstrate an openness to feedback as this may reduce the chances of the dissatisfactory experience being spread elsewhere.

3.5.6 The Marketplace–Consumer Relationship

On a wider level, the overall structure of the market can be crucial in the CCB process. For example, in a monopolistic market consumers are unable to switch suppliers, which can lead to consumer apathy in terms of providing feedback. Bodur, Borak and Kurtulus (1980) noted that 38% of respondents in Turkey 'did nothing' in comparison to only 21% in Canada, a finding that was largely attributed to the scarcity of alternative suppliers in Turkey.

3.5.7 Social Factors

An area that has not received much empirical attention is that of social influences. Boote (1998) suggested that peer pressure may encourage people to engage in complaining. Although this was merely speculation, it would be interesting to discover if this was applicable to HE, where students form close friendships and in some cases may encourage each other to voice dissatisfaction, especially if the issue affects the wider student body.

The above discussion has identified a myriad of factors that could explain consumers' use of different CCB responses. Indeed, it has been

suggested that because of this complexity, marketers will never gain a truly accurate impression of product performance:

The true relationship between complaints and product defectiveness is obscured by the operation of this large number of additional variables

(Jacoby and Jaccard, 1981, p. 18)

Similarly, Day et al. (1981) pointed out that because so many factors can affect the process, it may not be possible to develop a comprehensive index of propensity to complain; in particular some triggers may be especially difficult to operationalise (as has been shown in studies of personality and CCB). The next section will focus on the final trigger of CCB proposed by Boote (1998) - cultural factors - and will lead to a discussion of acculturation and CCB in Section 3.10.

3.6 Culture and CCB

Most of the early attempts at understanding CCB were largely confined to studies with culturally homogeneous samples. Much of this work was based in the US and this eventually led to researchers questioning the validity of the findings in an increasingly global economy (Liu, Watkins and Yi, 1997):

The ethnocentric nature of the studies fails to appreciate how culture can powerfully shape consumer complaint behaviour

(Chiu, Tsang and Yang, 2001, p. 174)

It has been argued that culture could affect all elements of the consumer behaviour process, including their initial expectations of a product/service and in particular how they respond to dissatisfactory incidents (Chen-Yu, Hong and Lee, 2001; Smith and Reynolds, 2001). It has also been suggested that a firm's ability to consistently provide their customers with a 'perfect' product offering diminishes when dealing in foreign markets:

No firm can provide perfect products or services, especially outside its home country, where the product/service operating conditions or situation may not be the same as in its home country

(Liu, Watkins and Yi, 1997, p. 91)

It has also been proposed that such a problem may be amplified when a service-based organisation serves multiple cultures simultaneously, owing to the different ways individuals evaluate purchases (De Ruyter, Perkins and Wetzels, 1995). Further to this, Raven and Foxman (1994) felt this process was complicated still further when an organisation is distanced from its customer base. This may be an applicable argument to HE, where universities operating franchises across the globe may struggle to gain accurate feedback on their performance.

Richins and Verhage (1985) were amongst the first researchers to highlight the lack of address of cross-cultural CCB. Their initial investigation suggested that culture could potentially explain:

- Levels of dissatisfaction experienced (for example, Pfaff [1976] reported results of a Customer Satisfaction Index in America between 1967-1975, which showed that various ethnic minority groups reported higher levels of dissatisfaction than whites);
- Extent to which consumers seek redress when dissatisfied;
- Nature of consumer attitudes towards making complaints.

Much subsequent work in this area has drawn on the cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede (1980) as a basis for understanding cultural differences. Unsurprisingly, the 'individualist-collectivist' dimension (which concerns issues such as self-expression) has been commonly used in CCB, with many researchers arguing that collectivist cultures do not encourage individuals to vent negative emotions in public (Liu, Watkins and Yi, 1997). Elsewhere, it has been noted that the 'uncertainty avoidance' dimension, which concerns a culture's attitude towards conflict, "seems particularly germane to a discussion of complaining behaviour" (Strahle, Hernandez, Garcia and Sorensen, 1992, p. 182).

Chen-Yu, Hong and Lee (2001) cited the work of Jasper (1989), who found differences between levels of dissatisfaction and complaint behaviours between European countries that were deemed culturally similar on Hofstede's dimensions. This has led other researchers to investigate if such differences are more pronounced when dealing with more culturally distinct nations. Much of this work has been conducted in

North America, and specifically comparing Americans with Hispanics/Latino Americans.

Hernandez and Fugate (2004) compared the complaint behaviours of Americans and Mexicans, and noted that whilst Mexicans have only recently begun to voice dissatisfaction publicly, Americans saw it as a more acceptable activity:

From a cultural perspective, the act of complaining and seeking redress is acceptable among US consumers. They know that they have express and implied rights to show their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with any good or service, and also to receive a response to their complaint. It might even be considered a consumption related ritual

(Hernandez and Fugate, 2004, p. 154)

In contrast, collectivist cultures such as Mexico accept that power is distributed unequally in their society, which can lead to the belief that complaining to organisations or merchants in elevated positions is a futile activity. In line with this, their research found that Mexicans are unsure as to the value of complaining and only share negative feelings with family and close friends. However, they also concluded that younger Mexicans who had been influenced by American culture had a slightly more positive attitude toward complaining, an idea discussed further in Section 3.10.

A similar study by Strahle et al. (1992) concluded that Puerto Ricans followed more private actions than their American counterparts, who showed a willingness to engage in more public complaining. They also

argued that Puerto Ricans would be unlikely to change their behaviours over time because the CCB construct is not “susceptible to imitative learning through mass media and/or personal exposure” (Strahle et al., 1992, p. 180).

Cornwell, Bligh and Babakus (1991) studied the extent to which Hispanics engaged in third party complaint behaviours. A key issue they raised was that of language proficiency – when complaining in an unfamiliar culture, an individual’s ability to communicate their dissatisfaction may prove crucial in their choice of CCB responses. This seems a pertinent issue for international students who wish to provide feedback to their university.

Even in the culturally similar nations of the US and England, Spalding and Marcus (1981) found that expectations were lower in England and this led to lower levels of dissatisfaction and complaints. In the US, expectations were higher, people were more prepared to vent their negative feelings and expected a swift resolution to their complaints.

Moving towards comparisons between UK/US and Asia, Liu and McClure (2001) believed that their complaint behaviours differed significantly depending on cultural background:

- **Collectivist Cultures:** Tend not to express their emotions outwardly, especially negative ones. Discussions tend to be intimate in nature;

- **Individualist Cultures:** Pride themselves on uniqueness and self-expression.

Their findings supported the view that private actions were preferred in collectivist cultures, as it was important to stop friends and family enduring the same negative experience. Indeed, a recent study by Ngai et al. (2007) found that such hesitance to complain directly may be related to power: Asian consumers will typically not complain if they believe themselves to be less powerful than the organisation.

Numerous studies have reached similar conclusions regarding how consumers in Asian cultures respond to dissatisfaction: Raven and Foxman (1994) found that Asians were more likely to take no action or contact a third party than non-Asians. The use of third parties was a surprising finding that could be attributed to organisation policy: in China many marketers would historically not listen to consumer feedback so contacting the media is the only means of venting dissatisfaction in the public domain. For collectivists, third party responses can be categorised by their level of confrontation: letters to newspapers are generally preferred owing to the lack of face to face contact.

Such findings also suggest that whilst the problem of consumers not reporting product defections/poor service is a global problem, it may be a more prominent issue in collectivist cultures. Similarly, Huang (1994) compared Taiwanese and US students and concluded the latter group

were significantly more likely to complain, although both groups did show a similar tendency to share negative experiences with their friends.

Yau (1988) also felt that Chinese consumers were more reliant on word of mouth, and attributed this to a high level of contact between group members. This can prove especially damaging for a marketer who may find that negative experiences are diffused across social groupings very quickly. Also, Chinese consumers believe in continuity and loyalty, virtues that may encourage them to stay with a poorly performing organisation as opposed to switching to a competitor.

In a study confined to middle class Chinese consumers, Thorelli (1982) found that in cases of dissatisfaction 90% believed they had the right to complain, but consumers were largely unaware of how to do so (a finding replicated by Ngai et al., 2007). As a result, only 13% of the sample actually complained publicly, whilst most engaged in more private behaviours. Such results suggest that consumer education may be a pertinent issue here; a dissatisfied consumer requires knowledge of not only where to complain, but also how to communicate their dissatisfaction effectively if they are to achieve a successful outcome.

From the above studies it is clear that the most significant difference between individualist and collectivist cultures is the use of private complaint behaviours: Asian consumers are more likely to merely share their dissatisfaction with family and close friends, meaning that if

organisations simply wait for negative feedback from these consumers they will not receive it (Yau, 1988). Despite the apparently definitive nature of such findings, Liu, Watkins and Yi (1997) cited the need for such cross-cultural CCB research to be expanded into other sectors, as much of the research outlined above was conducted in simple product categories such as everyday groceries.

It is also worth considering that the growth of the Internet may signify a change in how some cultures display their dissatisfaction. Park (2005) studied Korean consumers and found that: “unlike offline communication, consumers express their complaints aggressively online” (p. 28). Given that email is a prominent form of communication within HE this may be an area worthy of investigation (see Section 3.9).

Building on the above findings, researchers have attempted to understand which cultural traits cause Asian consumers to react in a different manner to western consumers (see Table 13). A common theme here appears to be that of ‘fate’; those who believe that events are pre-determined are unlikely to complain publicly and instead simply accept their misfortune. Another relevant issue is that of ‘moderation’; collectivist cultures encourage individuals to regulate their own actions and avoid extreme behaviours that may bring shame upon their family.

Author	Date	Cultural Traits/Beliefs
Yau	1988	Yuarn: "People cease to complain about their circumstances... before they accept their fate" (p. 47).
Le Claire	1993	<p>Harmony: Man cannot live alone; relationships need to be maintained to measure behaviour.</p> <p>Moderation: 'Chung-Yung' principle suggests people should avoid extreme behaviour; self regulation and moral self-control are critical.</p> <p>Face: Acts towards others, expectations and behaviour are situation oriented. An unsuccessful complaint would result in loss of face and ability to function in society.</p> <p>Pao: 'What goes around comes around' outlook implies that the company who did wrong will eventually suffer as a result. Associated with Yuarn which implies that everything is pre-determined.</p>
Raven and Foxman	1994	<p>Locus of Control: "Extent to which people believe they are in control of their own lives" (p. 238).</p> <p>Fatalism: Concerns acceptance of things beyond the individuals' influence.</p> <p>Attribution: Who is to blame for the dissatisfaction will impact upon CCB.</p>

Table 13: Cultural Traits relevant to East-Asian CCB (Various)

Just as culture can affect how consumers express their dissatisfaction, it has also been argued that culturally-tailored complaint handling systems are required to encourage complaints and recover dissatisfactory situations. As Asian consumers appear hesitant to vent their negative emotions publicly, Liu and McClure (2001) recommended that organisations develop a culturally-specific message to encourage feedback. Further, they suggested that developing relationship marketing programmes may help to obtain consumer feedback, as it increases the chances of them becoming part of consumer 'in-groups'. Liu, Watkins and Yi (1997) summarised that collectivists require:

a culturally appropriate complaining environment which is non-confrontational, non-public, and sincere and friendly

(Liu, Watkins and Yi, 1997, p. 100)

Hui and Au (2001) believe that in complaint resolution, the need for respect is particularly important in collectivist cultures. They investigated three different forms of compensation that could be offered to a dissatisfied consumer (discussion of the problem, financial compensation and written apology) and concluded that the success of these measures is dependent on culture. Similarly, Mattila and Patterson (2004) concluded that compensation has a more positive effect in Western cultures, whereas a speedy resolution and genuine apology are favoured by Eastern respondents. In line with this, Heung and Lam (2003) conducted a study of hotel users in Hong Kong and found that those who did complain were not overly interested in financial reward, but instead wanted the hotel to rectify any problems for the benefit of future guests.

3.6.1 Cross-Cultural CCB: An alternative explanation

Whilst Richins and Verhage (1985) were eager to suggest that CCB may be affected by cultural differences, they also suggested that future research needed to focus on the economic characteristics of the countries studied. Previously, Day et al. (1981) had already suggested that culture may not be the only factor that explains differences in CCB across nations:

Consumer dissatisfaction occurs in all nations of the world, but the ways in which consumers deal with it can be expected to vary from country to country.... with differences between countries being explained by cultural, economic, and political differences

(Day et al., 1981, p. 99)

The same authors further argued that three key economic and political differences needed to be considered:

- **General standard of living:** In poorer nations consumption levels are generally lower which will in turn reduce the prevalence of complaint behaviour;
- **Government Control:** The amount of legislation in place to protect consumers may impact upon the level of public complaining (for example, Grabicke [1980] pointed out that legislation in Germany caused many consumers to take more formalised action);
- **Consumer Assistance:** Third parties such as Business Bureaux are less common in developing nations, meaning consumers cannot seek advice on how to complain and subsequently lack the confidence to do so.

Linked to the above, Strahle et al. (1992) felt that some nations were characterised by institutional barriers to complaining. For example, some nations do not offer warranties with products, are not receptive to

complaints and make it difficult for consumers to communicate with them. In an earlier study, Thorelli (1982) had argued that owing to minimal consumer rights and low levels of competition in many sectors: “exit is just not a very practical weapon in China” (p. 110). However such an argument may no longer be applicable owing to China’s economic growth in recent decades (Angang, 2005).

Despite such suggestions, little empirical work was carried out in this area until recently, when Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006) argued that differences in CCB across nations could not be entirely attributed to culture:

The authors posit that differences in complaining behavior across various countries are instead due to competitive factors.... The fact that they [collectivist consumers] do not seek redress when dissatisfied, therefore, appears to have less to do with their underlying cultural values, and more to do with the prevailing return policies, which ultimately are determined by competitive forces within each country

(Blodgett, Hill and Bakir, 2006, p. 103-104)

In a two-part study, they firstly placed nations into three categories based upon their organisational policies on returns and complaints:

- **Liberal and Consumer Oriented:** Organisations in nations such as the US and UK are open to consumer feedback and will often offer significant compensation to defend market share from competitors;

- **More narrow and restrictive:** Here, products have to be damaged for consumers to seek redress successfully – dissatisfaction alone is unlikely to secure a replacement. In cases of faulty products, retailers typically offer repair or store credit as opposed to refunds (e.g. Brazil, France, Germany and Japan).

- **No returns or exchanges:** In such nations consumer protection legislation is weak and meaningless, so organisations do not offer returns or warranties. This results in more cautious behaviour from consumers (e.g. Taiwan, Albania, Kenya, Pakistan and India).

In the second phase, US-based students from each nation were presented with a scenario of a faulty clothing item and had to state how likely they were to seek redress both in the US and their home country. The results showed that all students were significantly more likely to seek redress in the US than they were back home: it was argued that because cultural values would remain stable regardless of location, this meant that the differing scores were attributable to differing returns policies:

Although we certainly would not claim that individual's underlying cultural values do not affect complaining behaviour to some extent, it appears that culture has a lesser influence on dissatisfied consumers' decision to seek (or not seek) a refund or exchange

(Blodgett, Hill and Bakir, 2006, p. 114)

Although this study offers an empirical explanation of CCB across cultures, it only taps into one form of complaining (public). In addition, the assumption that respondents' cultural values remain stable when in another culture has to be questioned – when students temporarily move into an unfamiliar culture they are certain to be influenced by the cultural values of those around them (Feldham and Rosenthal, 1990). The reality may well be that differences in complaint behaviours can be attributed to both cultural beliefs and market conditions.

This section has outlined the importance of nationality and culture in how individuals respond to dissatisfactory incidents, as well as how organisations should handle consumer dissatisfaction. In addition the possibility that differing CCBs may be attributable to political and economic differences has also been discussed. The opposing nature of these arguments indicates that further research is required in this area, particularly building on the work of Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006) to understand if indeed consumer attitudes towards complaining remain stable if placed in an unfamiliar culture:

There is a need for research in minority complaint behaviour. Results... suggest that ethnicity is an important aspect of consumer complaining behavior research

(Cornwell, Bligh and Babakus, 1991, p. 14)

3.7 Complaint Handling in Organisations

Given that as many as one in five purchases result in some form of dissatisfaction (Andreasen and Best, 1977), managing complaints is arguably one of the most crucial steps in maintaining strong consumer relationships. Historically, organisations in more developed economies only became receptive to consumer complaints in the 1970s (Zaichowsky and Liefeld, 1977), but even then management were hesitant to embrace the concept as it represented bad news and often incurred financial cost (Fornell and Westbrook, 1984). In many product categories, the majority of complaints are fielded by retail organisations meaning that manufacturers only rarely receive important information on product performance (Crie, 2003). This is made all the more alarming when “it is clear that complaints are a critical form of communication between consumer and business” (Cornwell, Bligh and Babakus, 1991, p. 3).

Etzel and Silverman (1981) conducted an early review of CCB from a managerial perspective, and believed that research had focused on the consumer but not the marketer, who are obliged to respond to complaints without having complete information or suitable skills. They argued that organisations had to develop an overall philosophy on consumer feedback and highlighted four different approaches evident in the marketplace:

Just as the dissatisfied customer has a variety of coping strategies, the retailer must also select an approach to dealing with customers who lodge complaints

(Etzel and Silverman, 1981, p. 126)

1. Ignore, make excuses, blame others, and avoid responsibility:

This is based on the somewhat dated viewpoint that complaints are not damaging to an organisation. However, having such an unsympathetic philosophy can in time reduce consumer expectations and thus levels of dissatisfaction;

2. Evaluate complaints and design equitable responses:

Organisations develop a fair system to deal with complaints based on the underlying principle of fairness;

3. Acquiescence: Consumer satisfaction is a key driver of the entire organisation, meaning that even invalid complaints result in some form of redress. Although this may improve consumer confidence it can also result in fraudulent complaining;

4. Encourage Complaining Behavior: Involves a pro-active approach to setting-up feedback inducing mechanisms (such as phone lines, suggestion boxes etc.). This can prove costly but may lead to increased satisfaction and repatronage, and is particularly important when dealing with consumers who lack self-confidence (Chelminski and Coulter, 2007).

The idea of encouraging complaint behaviour has been advocated by numerous academics as a means eliminating problems in the marketplace (Richins, 1982; Broadbridge and Marshall, 1995; Crie, 2003; Heung and Lam, 2003). Singh and Pandya (1991) felt that a key challenge for marketers is how to obtain information on minor problems that lead to low levels of dissatisfaction. This can be achieved by convincing consumers that “there is no such thing as a minor irritant” (Bolfing, 1989, p. 14).

To handle complaints effectively “a marketing manager needs to develop response strategies regardless of the legitimacy of the complaint” (Goodwin and Ross, 1990, p. 141). They argued that although financial compensation was preferred by most consumers, employees who actively listen, apologise for problems and commit to improving future performance for other consumers also have a positive impact on consumers. This led to the suggestion that the whole complaint management process can be deemed every bit as important as the actual outcome.

Elsewhere, it has been suggested that investment is required to train front-line staff to deal with dissatisfied consumers (Heung and Lam, 2003), that complaint data is stored centrally and shared with other departments (Hernandez and Fugate, 2004), and that general staff attitudes towards complaints are changed (Andreasen and Best, 1977). Also potentially relevant here are web-based blogs and bulletin boards that consumers can use to vent their anger with organisations – such information can

prove invaluable for marketers who wish to improve their offering (Park, 2005).

It has been argued that, provided complaints are handled fairly and professionally, the consumer may feel higher levels of satisfaction than if the purchase performed well initially (TARP Report, 1979 and later empirically supported by Blodgett, 1994). However, achieving this level of satisfaction may involve significant costs given that many consumers prefer some form of payment as compensation for their dissatisfactory experience. This view has however been challenged by Halstead and Page (1992), who investigated dissatisfied consumers of a carpet store, and concluded that high levels of product dissatisfaction cannot necessarily be eliminated by a successful complaint outcome, meaning the best way to secure loyalty is through minimising the levels of dissatisfaction in the first instance.

In a HE context, universities face multiple challenges should a student submit a formal complaint. Arguably, monetary compensation may not be seen as an appropriate means of redressing, for example, poor assessment procedures or teaching delivery. Equally, the very nature of education means that academics may be opposed to the idea of students having an increased say in how courses are organised and delivered (discussed further in Section 3.9). However, it appears that the changing financial structure of HE may raise student expectations, and as such universities need to have formalised procedures in place to handle

complaints, something which numerous universities have currently failed to achieve (www.bbc.co.uk, 2007).

3.8 Methodological Issues in CCB Research

At this point it is useful to consider some the methodological tools that have been utilised in order to develop the aforementioned models and knowledge surrounding CCB, as this will aid in the research design process (see Chapter 5). In line with the majority of consumer behaviour research, academics in the CCB field have been primarily guided by positivist methods:

The methodology of the field, adapted from the social indicators movement, is primarily survey techniques, especially mail and telephone questionnaires

(Russo, 1979, p. 453)

Specifically, it has been commented that research has been limited to consumers' self-reports of CCB, meaning respondents need to reminisce over previous dissatisfactory experiences (Bearden and Teel, 1983). Such a preference for quantitative methods is still evident in the most recent CCB studies, meaning that CCB research shares many methodological commonalities with the acculturation field. Indeed, Russo (1979) commented that much CCB research is guided by a desire to achieve high response rates to allow for generalisable conclusions and recommendations.

A significant proportion of previous studies have used student samples to collect data (e.g. Cho et al., 2002). Indeed some researchers have even included research participation in student assessment to boost response rates (Raven and Foxman, 1994). Fornell and Westbrook (1979) had earlier suggested that students were a suitable choice of research population:

The homogeneous nature of the student population.... reduces the variability of potential exogenous influences beyond the scope of study

(Fornell and Westbrook, 1979, p. 106)

However, such an approach has been criticised elsewhere, as student groups typically lack experience as consumers, especially for higher-priced items (Hernandez and Fugate, 2004). In this study the use of a student population is obviously necessary given that complaint behaviour is to be studied in an educational context.

Another sampling issue that has hampered previous research is an over-emphasis on 'complainers' (i.e. those who complain in a public manner: Day and Bodur, 1978; Russo, 1979). They suggested that because not all consumers register their dissatisfaction with an organisation, they could not be relied upon to provide a generalisable picture of complaints:

Data from a sample of the entire consumer population provides a frame of reference for putting the complaints of dissatisfied consumers in perspective

(Day and Bodur, 1978, p. 264)

This viewpoint was also put forward by Zaichowsky and Liefeld (1977), who warned companies that those consumers who write official letters of complaint are not necessarily representative of the entire population.

As has been suggested above, many studies have focused on only those who had complained directly to an organisation. To achieve this, researchers have asked respondents to pre-select their suitability for surveys by declaring if they have had any recent dissatisfactory experiences (Singh and Pandya, 1991; Blodgett, 1994; Huefner and Hunt, 2000). A slightly different technique was adopted by Day and Bodur (1978), who asked respondents to report their satisfaction levels across numerous product and service sectors. From this point, areas where satisfaction was low could be investigated in more detail. Although such methods ensure that respondents have relevant experiences to draw upon, they also place significant emphasis on consumers' memory and as such may lead to inaccurate reports.

In response to these criticisms, it has been suggested that a scenario/vignette questioning technique be used to understand consumer responses to dissatisfactory incidents. This was first deployed in 1984 by Valerie Folkes and has since been used in various CCB studies (Singh

1988; Slama and Williams 1991; Huang 1994; Hernandez and Fugate 2004). Such a method involves putting the respondent in a hypothetical dissatisfactory situation and asking them to indicate how they are likely to respond on a Likert scale. Scenarios allow the researcher control over other variables (Folkes, 1984) and also acknowledge that consumers will typically engage in multiple complaint behaviours (Hernandez and Fugate, 2004).

The vignette questioning technique (discussed further in Chapter 5) certainly appears to offer an easy-to-use method of understanding student complaint behaviour in a variety of given situations. In addition, it would appear appropriate to be used in a study designed to understand if acculturation is related to CCB:

Providing case scenarios as a basis for collecting data on complaining seems particularly appropriate when investigating the effects of individual factors on complaining behaviour

(Slama and Williams, 1991, p. 169)

Despite the continued dominance of quantitative methods in CCB research, since the 1990s researchers have become more open to a wider array of data collection tools. For example, De Ruyter, Perkins and Wetzels (1995) utilised the 'critical incident technique', which involved collecting consumer narratives on dissatisfactory experiences and analysing these qualitatively. They felt that unlike measurement scales,

such an approach is not culturally bound and as such appears useful if collecting data on CCB across cultures.

Elsewhere, Cornwell, Bligh and Babakus (1991) conducted a content analysis of third party complaint records, which allowed them to note the exact reasons for dissatisfaction and also record consumer demographics. Similarly, Mattson, Lemmink and McColl (2004) analysed the content of complaint letters to an Australian broadcasting organisation. Such an approach seems to hold considerable promise, as it offers an insight into the actual language used by dissatisfied consumers. However, this form of analysis lends itself to more formal complaints where documents have been written and submitted.

More controversially, Chiu, Tsang and Yang (2001) wanted to observe the reactions of Chinese consumers to faulty products, and achieved this by manipulating the quality of a vending machine so 50% of consumers did not receive their chosen product. Such an approach allowed the researchers to observe consumer reaction on a 'real time' basis, however the ethical issues raised may make this method difficult to implement.

Interestingly, the literature survey uncovered no examples of CCB researchers attempting to combine quantitative and qualitative methods in their empirical work. Given that such an approach can enable researchers to uncover previously undiscovered findings (Jick, 1979), it would seem logical that future research utilises a mixed methods approach.

3.9 Student Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaint Behaviour

There has been much debate in recent years as to whether universities should consider students as consumers of the educational product.

Arguably, increased competition from universities both at home and abroad has offered institutions little option but to become more student-centred. In addition to this, students now have increased avenues to influence future applications through contributing to independent research schemes such as the National Student Survey, which covered 148 UK HE institutions in 2007 (National Student Survey, 2007).

However, Olshavsky and Spreng (1995) have suggested that an emphasis on student satisfaction is flawed. They believed that in the context of education the 'consumer' is essentially unaware of what they need from any given course and are therefore not in an ideal position to judge the university's performance. Despite this argument, it has been argued that there is no longer any real reason not to treat students as consumers (Taylor, 1996; Webb and Jagun, 1997). Indeed, Gibbs and Knapp (2002) have argued that universities need to apply the marketing concept in order to survive: management need to be aware of their institution's strengths and weaknesses, and be able to communicate their offering to a broad market of students, researchers and potential benefactors.

As a result of increased competition, universities and researchers now consider student satisfaction as a critical factor in student retention. This

may be a particularly salient issue for international students, who face numerous cultural as well as academic challenges as part of the university experience (Hellsten and Prescott, 2004). Arambewela, Hall and Zuhair (2005) warn that countries such as Australia are increasing their efforts to attract students from across the globe, and suggest that UK and US universities need to focus more on student satisfaction levels to maintain their current dominance of the international student market. Further to this, Lapidus and Brown (1993) considered a combination of academic and non-academic issues and posited that on the whole international students are not satisfied with their university experience.

Previous work in the field of student satisfaction has largely focused on utilising the most appropriate measurement practices given the complexity of education provision (e.g. Lapidus and Brown, 1993). The benefits of having satisfied customers have been widely documented in studies conducted across many product and service categories. In a university context, high satisfaction levels can lead to:

- Highly motivated students, potentially leading to improved grades (Elliot and Shin, 2002);
- Higher levels of student retention, often used as a promotional tool in prospectuses (Wiers-Jenssen, Stervaker and Groggaard, 2002);
- Increased applications through favourable student word of mouth, especially prevalent given the emergence of the Internet (Martin, Milne-Horne, Barrett, Spalding and Jones, 2000);

- Favourable comparisons with competing institutions (Wiers-Jenssen, Stervaker and Groggaard, 2002).

It has been acknowledged that student satisfaction can be a particularly difficult area to measure accurately: Elliot and Shin (2002) proposed that satisfaction levels on campus are constantly being updated due to daily interactions with university staff. On a different level, Dolinsky (1994) suggested that as most students will only attend one university they lack an overall awareness of the market and therefore cannot provide comparative feedback.

Whilst the positive outcomes of student satisfaction have been acknowledged, far less attention has been paid to the notion of 'Student Complaint Behaviour', that is, understanding student dissatisfaction and how they may react should they become dissatisfied with a university or course. Much like in any other sector, dissatisfied students have a variety of potential responses at their disposal, some of which are undetectable (Su, 1998) and all of which can prove potentially damaging to the university. Research is needed to understand what issues are most likely to lead to student dissatisfaction and how students are likely to respond in such situations.

Despite growing work examining the existence of CCB across service industries, research has largely failed to investigate complaint behaviour in a higher education context (Wright et al., 1996). This is all the more

surprising when considering the view that “efforts to minimize and to address student complaints are crucial for ensuring a university’s success” (Dolinsky, 1994, p. 28).

This gap in the literature may well be attributed to the traditionally high levels of student retention in the UK which may have rendered such studies of limited practical value (Aldridge and Rowley, 2001). However, given increasing levels of international competition and student mobility, managing student dissatisfaction is an increasingly relevant issue. Butcher and McGrath (2004) commented that the number of international students has “simultaneously anecdotally saved institutions from bankruptcy while putting increasing pressure on student support services” (p. 540), with such pressures arguably increasingly the probability of students experiencing dissatisfaction with the service provided by their university.

An early attempt to understand student dissatisfaction was offered by Aldridge and Rowley (2001), who utilised Herzberg’s motivation theory to explain when students become unhappy with their university:

- **Dissatisfaction/Hygiene Factors:** These need to be managed to avoid dissatisfaction (non-academic issues such as facilities);
- **Satisfiers:** Issues that need addressing with more imagination, such as enhancing the teaching and assessment experience.

Such an approach is useful as it implies that universities need to focus on the academic experience to truly satisfy their students. However this approach fails to acknowledge the range of issues that could cause a student to make a complaint; Dolinsky (1994) found that the most common area of dissatisfaction was concerned with the quality of tutors, whilst it has been suggested that group work and assessment are academic issues that can result in negative feedback (Barfield, 2003; Burke, 2004).

From a slightly less student-centred viewpoint, Burke (2004) considered the literature on high-maintenance employees (who cause organisations significant problems through constant criticism and complaints) and felt this concept could be easily transferred to the student body. Such high-maintenance students complain incessantly and beyond reasonable limits, which can exhaust tutors and lower student morale. She further suggested that the most conscientious and confident students with a strong desire to succeed are most likely to complain regularly. Such students can be hard to identify so tutors need to focus on providing timely and practical feedback to allay their dissatisfaction.

Despite offering an insight into the largely neglected area of student complaints, there is no evidence to suggest that complaints only originate from higher-achieving students. Further, this viewpoint tends to treat complaining students as a 'necessary evil', when in reality universities can use feedback to improve their future provision (Fornell and Westbrook, 1984).

3.9.1 A Preliminary Model of Student Complaint Behaviour

Whilst the above writers have recognised the increased prominence of dissatisfied students in HE, attempts to develop a comprehensive taxonomy of student responses to dissatisfaction have been extremely rare (e.g. Su, 1998). Such a framework would be useful to educational managers who are keen to monitor negative student feedback and ensure this is not shared with fellow students or future applicants.

As with consumers of any other product or service, students are faced with a plethora of potential responses to a dissatisfactory experience, many of which are loosely linked with those highlighted in Section 3.4. In this section previous models will be used to develop a preliminary model of Student Complaint Behaviour that can be investigated as part of the data collection process.

Public Behaviours: The most obvious and potentially damaging outcome is a student withdrawing from the university or course; indeed, withdrawal has been referred to as “an extreme form of disloyal behaviour” (Aldridge and Rowley, 2001, p. 57). More specifically, this may involve transferring to another course within the university, moving to another institution (Dolinsky, 1994), or even more worryingly leaving HE all together. Whilst many students cite personal and financial reasons for withdrawal from their studies (Bennett, 2003), it is also logical to assume that students who

are dissatisfied with the university are less likely to complete their course (Elliot and Shin, 2002).

Theoretically, this can be seen as a public form of complaining, as students will have to formally register their withdrawal with university staff. However, as this study only targets students who are still enrolled with the university, it will be considered as a non-behavioural option (in data collection, this will be operationalised as 'Consider leaving the university' – see Chapter Five).

Unhappy students may also consider speaking directly to lecturers about their dissatisfaction. This face to face contact may prove intimidating for students who fear that their complaints could lead to lower grades in future assessments. However, the growth of email communication within universities has offered students a chance to provide feedback without the perceived awkwardness of a face to face conversation, something particularly relevant to Asian students (Yau, 1988). As a result complaining via email is included as a separate option. However, despite email communication offering a less confrontational complaint channel, students are generally hesitant to share their dissatisfaction with member of university staff (Su and Bao, 2001).

Another potential avenue to express dissatisfaction is through non-academic staff within a university, who may be able to resolve certain

operational problems and are consequently included in the preliminary model:

Administrators may increase retention by decreasing the extent to which students are subjected to dissatisfying experiences, and by successfully resolving potentially dissatisfying experiences. Both of these actions may also decrease negative word of mouth behaviour on the part of students

(Wright et al., 1996, p. 221)

Private Behaviours: Whilst more extreme responses such as public and third party behaviours may be limited to serious cases of dissatisfaction, it is likely that more minor dissatisfactory experiences will be shared with fellow students and the wider population through negative word of mouth. Indeed, Etzel and Silverman (1981) felt that complaints about educational institutions “are often made to fellow sufferers rather than to individuals in positions of influence” (p. 133).

Not only can this word of mouth prove damaging for the current student cohort (in terms of lower motivation to attend classes, lack of confidence in tutors etc.), this can have a serious affect on an institution’s future success. Dolinsky (1994) highlighted that if such word of mouth was to spread to future university candidates then enrolments would be likely to suffer as a result. Further to this, the reputation of the university could come under scrutiny, a particularly crucial issue in terms of the international student market (Arambewela, Hall and Zuhair, 2005). It is also important to distinguish between different recipients of word of mouth:

whilst fellow students may empathise and be able to offer practical advice, family and other friends may lack such knowledge and at best can only offer the student the opportunity to vent their frustration.

Much like in general consumer scenarios, it has been found that private complaining is the preferred means of voicing dissatisfaction in the HE sector. Su and Bao (2001) clustered US students based on their likely complaint behaviour and found that 44% of respondents could be described as 'private complainers' who are reluctant to share complaints with those in influential positions. It has been suggested that students may resort to private complaining because of fears that official complaints may leave them open to future sanctions from the university (Su, 1998).

In the long term, a dissatisfactory student experience will deter graduates from having a future relationship with the university. This may deny the university a pool of potential postgraduate or doctoral candidates (Wright et al., 1996) or hamper attempts to develop a strong alumni programme, an important alternative source of income for US (and increasingly UK) universities. However, as repeat patronage is not a particularly regular occurrence in the HE sector, this was not included as part of the model.

Third Party Behaviours: In more serious situations, students may wish to take their complaints to a third party who can act as a mediator in the conflict resolution process. This may include seeking advice from separate bodies under the university 'umbrella' – namely student support staff,

counsellors or even the Student Union. However, such support services will naturally vary between universities, and students will need to be made aware of these avenues as part of their university induction.

In 2004, the Government formed the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) to act as an external third party to handle serious allegations against universities. Whilst the body can merely provide recommendations to parties upon hearing evidence on each case, students are showing an increased willingness to utilise this option, with the OIAHE reporting a 44% increase in complaints in its 2006 report (www.oiahe.org.uk). As awareness of this body gradually increases it is likely that such complaint figures will continue to increase, testament to the heightened expectations in the student body. However, given the low awareness levels of the OIAHE amongst the international student population this was not included in the preliminary model.

Non-behavioural responses: Su and Bao (2001) found that 33% of US students could be described as 'passive recipients', who instead of venting dissatisfaction externally will employ less visible strategies such as avoiding particular tutors or subjects. Any model of CCB needs to account for those individuals who will not voice their complaints in any way regardless of dissatisfaction levels. For instance, students with a particularly positive image of the university may forgive universities for rare and minor service failures. It is also feasible that students, despite not feeling the need to share their dissatisfaction with others, may develop a

slightly more negative view of an individual tutor, department or even the university as a whole.

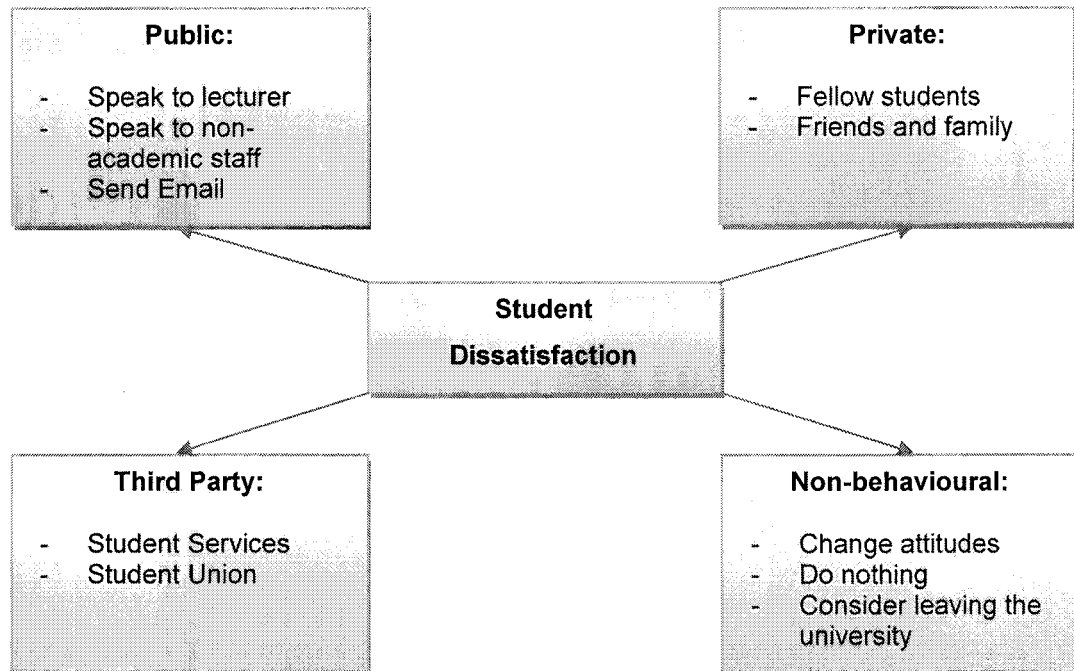


Figure 13: A Preliminary Model of Student Complaint Behaviour

From the above review, and based on the models illustrated in Section 3.4, Figure 13 provides an initial attempt to understand the options available to dissatisfied students. This will be operationalised as part of the data collection process (Chapter Five) and the findings documented in Chapter Six.

3.10 Development of Research Questions and Hypotheses

After reviewing the literature on acculturation and CCB (Chapters Two and Three respectively), the following discussion will use existing literature to introduce the research questions that provide the focus for the current

study (as initially presented in Chapter 1). Throughout this section brief references will be made to the proposed methodology which will be elaborated further in Chapter Four.

In Section 3.6 a number of studies were reviewed which identified a significant link between an individual's cultural background and how he or she expresses dissatisfaction with products and services. In particular, it has been argued that the Western world (represented by the US and Western Europe) and East-Asian nations differ markedly in terms of CCB, and this can be largely attributed to the cultural values across these countries (e.g. Le Claire, 1993). Whilst members of individualist cultures pride themselves on self-expression which leads to public forms of complaining, collectivist cultures teach the importance of harmony and regulation, which can result in more private forms of complaining (Liu and McClure, 2001).

Whilst such research has provided marketers with a greater insight into attitudes towards complaining across cultures, they have been guilty of treating culture as a static phenomenon that is not influenced by cross-cultural contact and migration (Steenkamp, 2001). Indeed, Raven and Foxman commented how their own study on Asian complaint behaviour "skirts around difficult and unresolved issues of acculturation and the meaning of race" (1994, p. 239). Such an approach was also more covertly adopted by Huang (1994), who utilised the sampling process to exclude respondents that had been in the US for less than 10 years in his

study, seemingly with the deliberate aim of eliminating the acculturation variable from his study. From the above examples, it appears that a significant gap in the existing literature is an understanding of whether acculturation is related to CCB. In particular, it would be of use to marketers to understand if the way in which an immigrant/sojourner adapts to life in an unfamiliar culture (Berry, 1980) impacts upon their complaint behaviours. This may be a particularly pertinent issue in a university environment, which is characterised by large numbers of new sojourners on a regular basis, who each face the decision of how to adapt to life in an unfamiliar culture.

Research Question 1: Does a relationship exist between the acculturation style adopted by East-Asian students and their consumer complaint behaviour styles?

As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the above question investigates if a relationship exists between Berry's (1980) acculturation styles and the student complaint behaviours depicted in Figure 13. Therefore it would appear that this question is best answered using a quantitative approach, which requires developing a number of hypotheses from the existing literature.

Acculturation has already been linked to numerous facets of consumer behaviour. For example, assimilated immigrants in Western societies have been found to search for product information differently (Luna and Gupta,

2001) and display lower levels of brand loyalty (O'Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber, 1986). Of the four acculturation styles, those who have adopted either an integration or assimilation style show an increased willingness to acquire the behaviours of the dominant culture. As has been suggested by Maldonado and Tansuhaj (2002), these individuals are consequently most likely to adopt the consumer behaviours of the host society. In the context of CCB, this would involve showing an increased propensity to engage in public forms of complaining such as visiting the store or calling a complaint department (Hernandez and Fugate, 2004).

Hypothesis 1: An association exists between the 'Assimilation' acculturation style and 'Public' complaint behaviours.

Null Hypothesis 1: No association exists between the 'Assimilation' acculturation style and 'Public' complaint behaviours.

Hypothesis 2: An association exists between the 'Integration' acculturation style and 'Public' complaint behaviours.

Null Hypothesis 2: No association exists between the 'Integration' acculturation style and 'Public' complaint behaviours.

In contrast, those individuals who adopt either a separation or marginalisation acculturation style are not motivated to engage in the behaviours of the dominant culture, and instead maintain their previous cultural behaviours or even withdraw from society altogether (Berry, 1980). For both of these groups, it would be expected that any dissatisfaction

would not be displayed publicly or via third party organisations, and would instead only be shared with family and close in-groups (Yau, 1988). This leads to the development of hypotheses 3 and 4:

Hypothesis 3: An association exists between the 'Separation' acculturation style and 'Private' complaint behaviours.

Null Hypothesis 3: No association exists between the 'Separation' acculturation style and 'Private' complaint behaviours.

Hypothesis 4: An association exists between the 'Marginalisation' acculturation style and 'Private' complaint behaviours.

Null hypothesis 4: No association exists between the 'Marginalisation' acculturation style and 'Private' complaint behaviours.

It is the above hypotheses that are to be tested in Stage One of data collection, with separate instruments used to measure both acculturation and complaint behaviour styles (see Chapter Five). The hypotheses are displayed diagrammatically in Figure 14 below. Although this figure illustrates that both the non-behavioural and third party complaint behaviours are not incorporated into the hypotheses for this study, it was felt that they are an integral element of any CCB study, and their inclusion in the online survey may also uncover some findings that can be further explored via more qualitative data collection methods.

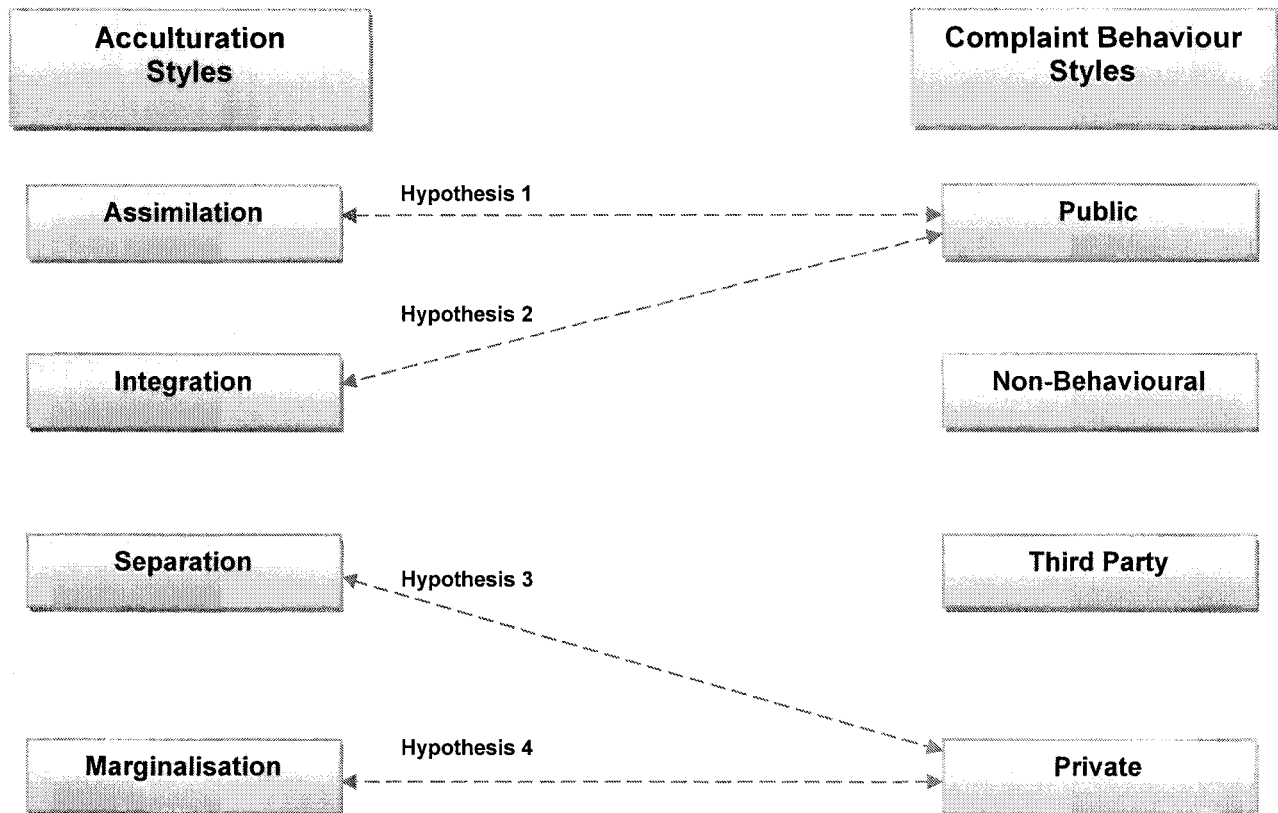


Figure 14: Diagrammatic Representation of Hypotheses

Another pertinent issue raised in the literature is concerned with the acculturation process of international students, and in particular the variety of academic, social and cultural challenges they face throughout their sojourn (e.g. Leung, 2001). It has even been suggested that international students anticipate such problems in the early stages of their adaptation (Carsky and Coleman, 1998). However, many of these studies appear to be dated in nature and may not capture the sorts of challenges that are now most relevant for international students: for example, it may be that due to increased numbers of international students forming friendships is less of a concern, and is instead replaced by financial worries given the

increased cost of living in the UK. Although a growing body of research addresses the acculturation experiences of Asian students, this seems to originate from either the US or Australasia, which limits the potential usefulness of these findings for UK universities concerned with the student acculturation process.

Research Question 2: What are the acculturation challenges experienced by East-Asian students whilst adapting to life in the UK?

In addition to cultural values, it has also been argued that economic and political differences may help to explain differences in CCB across nations (Day et al., 1981). This was developed further in a recent study by Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006), who utilised a sample of international students in the US to illustrate that an immigrant's CCB may instead be influenced by the prevailing returns and complaint handling policies in those countries. This provides an alternative argument to much of the research investigating culture and CBB and therefore warrants further investigation.

In order to gain a greater understanding of the importance of culture and other economic factors, the current study also aims to understand the complaining experiences of international students both in their home culture and in the UK. The target respondents have been exposed to different cultures for a relatively long period of time and as such have experienced life as a consumer in two countries for longer than most

individuals, who may be reliant on tourism to form opinions of other cultures. In addressing this question it will be useful to investigate international students' attitudes towards complaint handling policies in both the UK and their home country and their views on the appropriateness of complaining in general. The findings may further support the work of Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006) as to the importance of more economic issues and may also address Thorelli's (1982) somewhat dated view that switching brands is not a powerful weapon for Asian consumers due to limited choice.

Research Question 3: What are East-Asian students' experiences of complaining in different cultures?

As discussed in Section 3.9, the changing market conditions of HE have forced universities to consider students as consumers of the educational product. This has led universities to invest greater resources into assessing student satisfaction and using this data as a marketing tool in future recruitment. However, universities have not been equally pro-active in understanding how students react to dissatisfactory experiences. Students may vent their dissatisfaction by spreading negative word of mouth that could damage the reputation of the institution, a particularly important issue for potential international students (Arambewela, Hall and Zuhair, 2005).

Whilst the measurement instruments used to answer Research Question 1 will assess how students are most likely to react to dissatisfactory incidents, research is also required to understand student attitudes towards complaining in an educational environment. Prior to 1999, students were not expected to contribute towards university fees in the UK, which may have deterred individuals from complaining given the perception that they are receiving their education 'for free'. However, as UK Government policy has gradually shifted the cost of university education to the student this may have increased expectation levels and thus increased the likelihood of dissatisfied students seeking some form of redress.

Given the cultural differences highlighted in Chapters Two and Three, venting dissatisfaction towards a university may be a problematic issue for students from collectivist cultures, given that a significant element of their culture surrounds respecting people in authority (Feldham and Rosenthal, 1990). It may be that East-Asian students would not even consider complaining to the university because of their cultural values, meaning that dissatisfactory experiences are not being fed back to the institution.

Research Question 4: What are East-Asian students' attitudes towards complaining about the university should they become dissatisfied?

From the above discussion, it would appear that Research Questions 2-4 are more focused on understanding the individual experiences of East-Asian students and as such lend themselves to a more qualitative line of enquiry. This will be considered further in Chapter Four.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the concepts of Consumer Dissatisfaction and subsequently CCB, outlining the main reasons behind consumer complaints. From here, a number of models of CCB were introduced which contributed to the development of a preliminary model of Student Complaint Behaviour in Section 3.9.1.

The chapter also included a review of key triggers that affect how consumers respond to dissatisfaction, and an emphasis on cultural background led to the development of a number of research questions and hypotheses in Section 3.10. From this point, Chapters 4 and 5 will focus on the data collection process, addressing firstly the theoretical approach adopted and subsequently on the methods used to test the hypotheses.

Chapter Four: Research Philosophy and Methodology

4.1 Overview of the Chapter

Following on from the development of research questions and hypotheses in Chapter Three, this chapter will outline the philosophical and methodological decisions that have guided this empirical study, following the framework provided in Figure 15 below. Initially, epistemological issues surrounding objectivity and subjectivity will be discussed in relation to this study. From this point, the importance of selecting a theoretical perspective will be discussed before introducing pragmatism as the philosophy guiding the current study. The chapter will conclude by introducing the mixed methodology that provides the focus for Chapter Five.

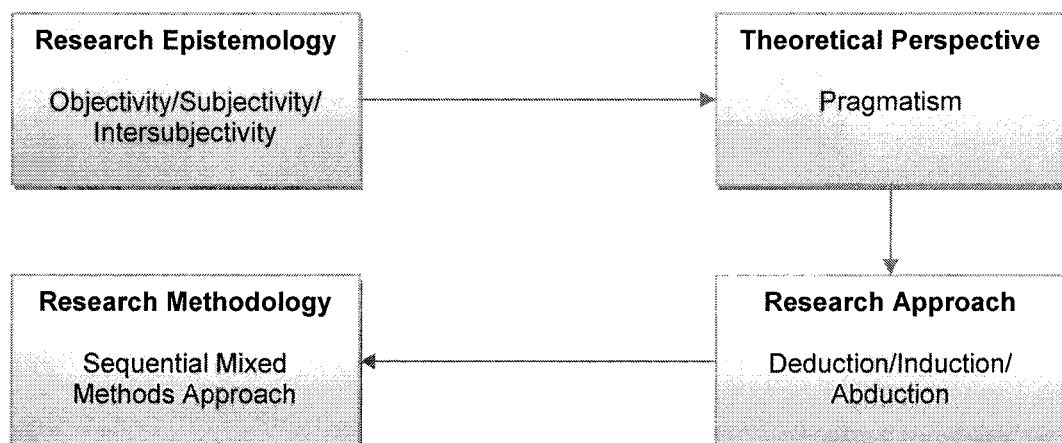


Figure 15: Overview of Research Philosophy and Methodology (adapted from Crotty, 2004)

4.2 Research Epistemology

Hirschheim (1985) defines research epistemology as: “our theory of knowledge: and in particular, how we acquire knowledge” (1985, p. 1). More specifically, Morgan (2007) notes that epistemology concerns the relationship of the researcher with the overall research process. Traditionally, researchers have been divided into two distinct camps: objectivist and subjectivist.

Those academics approaching research from a positivist perspective (see Section 4.3) have argued for what is known as ‘objectivity’: a position whereby the researcher is entirely independent from the process of research design, data collection and analysis. Here, the values of the researcher do not impact upon the results, as the research is designed to identify a single truth that can be widely applied to understand the world we live in. However, according to Hirschheim (1985) a group of Greek teachers known as the Sophists were amongst the first to question the belief that knowledge (study findings) could be completely separated from human values (of the researcher) “since man cannot transcend his language and culture, he cannot obtain any absolute viewpoint” (Hirschheim, 1985, p. 1).

This criticism led to the development of what is referred to as ‘subjectivity’, where the emphasis instead is on understanding social reality through the lens of actors in the human world. Both researcher and participant values

are central to their world views and are therefore treated as an integral part of the research process. The contrasting nature of these two concepts forces modern researchers to face a simple dichotomous choice between attempting to find a 'single truth' that explains the world (objectivity) or instead attempting to investigate individual interpretations of that reality (subjectivity).

Writing in the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, Morgan built on the thoughts of more recent pragmatic researchers by claiming that "the usual forced dichotomy between subjective and objective is an artificial summary of the relationship between the researcher and the research process" (2007, p. 71). Further, he argued that whilst many academics are quick to criticise the notion of 'complete objectivity', it is equally difficult to understand what would constitute 'complete subjectivity', and therefore there exists a need for some degree of mutual understanding between these bi-polar viewpoints. The term he proposed to break this rigid dichotomy is 'intersubjectivity', which allows researchers to believe in a single 'real world', but also appreciate that all individuals have their own unique interpretations of that reality.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) had earlier claimed that values will always have an impact upon research outcomes; however they felt this was not something that researchers should find overly problematic. Even the decision of 'what to investigate' is guided by the values and personal interests of the researchers involved, so trying to eliminate values from the

research is a pointless task (Goles and Hirschheim, 2000). Morgan (2007) noted that the earliest writers associated with pragmatism consciously used their own values in their writings to further their own political agendas, an act which reminds us that: "our values and our politics are always a part of who we are and how we act" (p. 70). Tapio (1996) went as far as suggesting that a key strength of pragmatism was that it intertwines both known facts and the values of individuals to tell a more comprehensive story of the phenomena under investigation.

4.3 Theoretical Perspective

A key element of any study is establishing the overall theoretical perspective or paradigm that guides the project. Paradigms can be defined as "worldviews or belief systems that guide researchers" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 3). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (1991 and 2005) felt that selecting an appropriate theoretical approach is a crucial step as it encourages a knowledge of different approaches that can offer the researcher greater flexibility when choosing methods.

Collis and Hussey (2003) argue that, although there are two dominant paradigms (positivism and interpretivism), there is considerable blurring between the two they and can be best considered as two extremes along a continuum, leading to a much wider array of theoretical perspectives (Figure 16). Further to this, Creswell's (2003) work underlines the eclectic

role of Pragmatism in relation to the more accepted positivist and interpretivist paradigms:

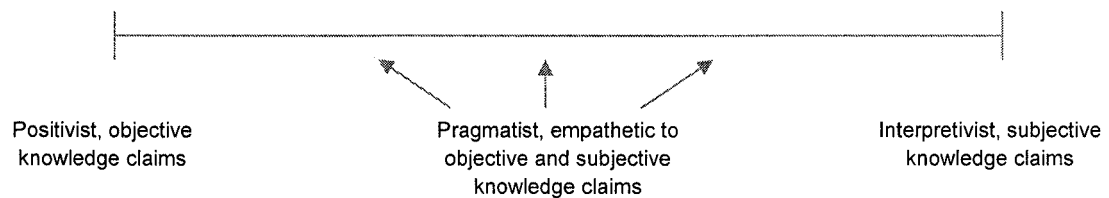


Figure 16: Understanding pragmatism in relation to other scientific paradigms (adapted from Collis and Hussey, 2003)

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) discussed how academics labelled as ‘pacifists’ were the first to suggest that the two extreme stances are methodologically compatible, which led to the early development of mixed methods that began to gather momentum throughout the 1980s.

There is growing acceptance that within a study, a researcher can view reality as an external construct (objectivity) whilst simultaneously viewing that reality through the experience of individuals (subjectivity). Indeed, it has been argued that researchers no longer face “the grand either-or” in relation to objectivity and subjectivity (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p. 23). Smith and Helhusius (1986) traced the history of the quantitative-qualitative debate and highlighted three key stages:

- **Conflict:** Stage of direct competition, when positivism was initially challenged by some as inappropriate for the social sciences;

- **Détente:** A short-lived period of co-existence and acceptance;
- **Compatibility and Co-operation:** Up until this point, accepting one theoretical perspective meant a rejection of all others, something which was increasingly considered illogical given that paradigms could not be viewed as airtight categories (Morgan, 2007). As researchers accepted that both approaches have the same goals, academics began to appreciate how the two methods could be combined within studies. Any differences on a philosophical level are largely ignored, with the focus shifting towards the practicalities of conducting research.

Such co-operation has added weight to the view that pragmatists and other researchers need not worry about the works of Plato or Kant and discussions around what constitutes 'truth'. Indeed, Rorty (1982) summarised that a pragmatist "cuts across the transcendental/empirical distinction by questioning the common presupposition that there is an invidious distinction to be drawn between kinds of truths" (Rorty, 1982, p. xvi). Datta (1994) felt that an age of collaboration was now evident in the increasing number of funding agencies that approved projects based on a combination of positivist and anti-positivist viewpoints. The same author felt that it was in the interests of the research community as a whole that the traditional dominance of positivism has been challenged:

paradigmatic unity (or more specifically, paradigmatic dominance) is fundamentally undesirable. It is done at the expense of constraining the domain of inquiry by taking one viewpoint and construing all others through its lens. This we argue leads to a reduction in the variety of research approaches and limits their potential cross-fertilisation

(Datta, 1994, p. 263)

As will be discussed further in Section 4.5, the increased trend towards acceptance and even co-operation has been deemed a positive development:

The détente of the paradigm wars has been positive for research development in many fields because most researchers now use whatever method is appropriate for their studies, instead of relying on one method exclusively”

(Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p. 5-6)

Indeed, Goles and Hirschheim (2000) have also advocated the use of a wider array of methods, suggesting that research needs to focus more on results than the worldviews that guide them: “science, for all intents and purposes, is a problem-solving vehicle” (p. 251). Linked to this, Goldkuhl (2004) has argued that the choice of a theoretical perspective is not just an abstract philosophical matter but also an issue of empirical data:

Proponents of this [pragmatist] viewpoint argue that a single research perspective limits, distorts, or even obscures relationships

(Goles and Hirschheim, 2000, p. 256)

Pragmatism can be traced back to the works of Charles Pierce around the 1860s, and was built upon by various writers, in particular William James and John Dewey (Murphy, 1990). It has been referred to as “a philosophical alternative to abstract and rationalistic science” (Goldkuhl, 2004, p.1). The same author sees pragmatism as based on the idea that knowledge can bring about action and change – a pragmatist is not only interested in ‘what is’, but also ‘what might be’.

Another key feature of the pragmatist stance is the emphasis on ‘what works best’ in a research setting. Crucial here is the confession that, from a pragmatic perspective, understanding the complete truth is not feasible, and instead resources should be best allocated to the activities which will produce the most useful results. This relates to the comments of Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher and Perez-Prado (2003), who stated that a pragmatic researcher holds a “no priori commitment” (p. 21) to using any one method, seeing all as potentially useful. This argument was furthered by Goldkuhl (2004), who believed that pragmatists share concerns from positivism as well as anti-positivism in their quest to understand the world as clearly as possible.

Cherryholmes (1992) stressed that a key tenet of pragmatism was its emphasis on the practical consequences of knowledge. A pragmatic researcher utilises relevant theory but always questions how this can be applied in real-life environments:

Pragmatism links theory and praxis. The core reflection process is connection to action outcomes that involve manipulating material and social factors in a given context

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 53)

In terms of this research programme, it is hoped that the findings can contribute towards a greater understanding of international students that can be used to help integrate these students more efficiently, and handle any dissatisfactory experiences they may have throughout their time at the university.

Linked to the importance of the practical implications of knowledge, Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) noted that pragmatists are primarily guided by the research questions or problems that are encountered in everyday life. Whilst other more established theoretical perspectives encourage what can be deemed as a 'top-down' approach to methodology (whereby the researcher's paradigm influences the use of particular methods and therefore what can be investigated), pragmatists employ a 'bottom-up' approach, letting the problem at hand guide the decisions made surrounding methodology and method (Johnson, Onwegbuzie and Turner, 2007).

Goldkuhl (2004) notes that, unlike positivists, pragmatists are not overly concerned with using results to make generalisations about the wider population, because research uses data from the past which is not necessarily an accurate indicator of future events. Pragmatists are instead

more concerned with issues surrounding respondent bias which can be, to some extent, eliminated through triangulation of data:

For a pragmatist, closeness to empirical phenomena and triangulation of data and methods, are ways to escape a too large dependence on informants' conceptions

(Goldkuhl, 2004, p. 10)

Such a viewpoint clearly suggests that pragmatists see combining research methods as not only a potentially useful strategy but one that is integral to producing useful findings. This is discussed further in Section 4.5.

Despite the apparent benefits of adopting a pragmatic approach to research, it has to some extent failed to become recognised as a valid paradigm by academics. For example, Burrell and Morgan (1979) developed a two-way taxonomy of research philosophies and did not include pragmatism as a potential middle ground between the more extreme stances of positivism and social constructionism. As recently as 2000, Healy and Perry commented that only four paradigms should be considered: Positivism, Critical Theory, Constructivism, and Realism. Such non-acceptance from social scientists has made it difficult for new or experienced researchers to gain credibility when using this approach. This is particularly surprising given that a pragmatic approach can result in the generation of knowledge which can be of both theoretical and practical

use. Stern and Barley (1996) highlighted two main barriers to adopting lesser-known paradigms such as pragmatism:

- Milieu of the field: certain subject areas are associated with particular approaches. In the current study, it has already been identified that acculturation and CCB research has been dominated by positivist approaches.
- Linked to the above, new emerging fields tend to follow the rules set by more established ones to gain peer approval. This also feeds into requirements for journal submissions: Bryman (2007) found that a large proportion of mixed methods researchers only published based on one element of their research findings (i.e. presenting their work as a mono-method study) to maximise their chances of being accepted into mainstream journals.

Another barrier to the acceptance of pragmatism is the perception that such research does not stand up to other theoretical perspectives in terms of rigour and thoroughness. It has been argued that whilst conducting mixed methods research, researchers cannot use the principles of pragmatism to simply justify a poor or unstructured research strategy (Goles and Hirschheim, 2000; Collis and Hussey, 2003). Consequently, pragmatists should make every effort to provide fully detailed accounts of the data collection and analysis process.

Despite its apparent unpopularity with some academics, pragmatism is deemed to be the most appropriate research philosophy to guide the current study. The single most important justification behind the use of a pragmatic viewpoint concerns the actual concepts under scrutiny. For both acculturation and CCB, there exists a need to:

- Understand the behaviours widely adopted by the population under study (in this instance, investigating strategies adopted when moving to the UK and propensity to complain in a university setting);
- Build on this knowledge by understanding the experiences of individuals from within the population (their acculturation and negative consumer experiences).

This need to investigate acculturation and CCB in both an indicative and deductive manner (viewing research through a “bi-focal lens”:

Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005, p. 383) demands a more pragmatic approach to the process of collecting data. The same authors also argued that a pragmatic outlook enables researchers to zoom-in to microscopic detail (by reviewing individual interpretations) and also zoom-out to indefinite scope (allowing researchers to make guarded claims concerning generalisability). This led them to summarise that:

pragmatic researchers are more likely to view research as a holistic endeavour that requires prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation

(Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005, p. 383)

Pragmatists are primarily driven by the research questions they are interested in (Goles and Hirschheim, 2000), and in this case a review of the research questions in Section 3.10 concludes that they could not all be tackled using a purely positivist or interpretivist approach. It was felt that the research questions should provide the impetus for the study, as opposed to any inherent researcher preferences for either quantitative or qualitative methodologies. Further, pragmatists place great influence on the practical implications of their findings (Goldkuhl, 2004). One of the aims of the current study is to utilise the findings on acculturation and CCB to provide practical recommendations for universities with an interest in the welfare of their international student cohort. It has also been reported that a mixed methods approach is needed to truly understand acculturation (Nwankwo and Lindridge, 1998).

Similarly, previous studies in CCB have been almost entirely reliant on positivist methods and thus may have missed out on potentially revealing insights; adopting a pragmatic approach gives the researcher the opportunity to utilise a wider array of potential methods to answer the research questions. As has been suggested by Howe: “it is high time to close down the quantitative versus qualitative conversation” (1988, p. 11).

In terms of alternative philosophical approaches, the researcher also considered the merits that a phenomenological stance could bring to the study. Lester (1999, p.1) views phenomenology as being “concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, ‘bracketing’ taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of thinking”. As Crotty (2004) supports, phenomenologists attempt to understand the world by putting aside all previous knowledge and treating even the most basic everyday experiences with suspicion.

Crotty (2004) credits Edmund Husserl with the foundation of the phenomenological approach at the beginning of the twentieth century. The viewpoint, which naturally lends itself to a more qualitative line of enquiry, appears particularly pertinent to research addressing cultural issues. As Crotty (2004) notes, phenomenologists accept the value of culture and that it offers individuals freedom, however at the same time it also sets boundaries which can make it particularly difficult to appreciate alternative ways of thinking. This argument seems relevant to the current study where a British researcher is trying to understand facets of East-Asian culture without any prior experience of living or studying abroad. In addition, Lester (1999) notes that in such an approach it is critical to develop a rapport with respondents and the key to achieving this is through demonstrating an empathetic attitude, something that can prove extremely challenging if researching individuals from an alternative culture.

However, the very idea of commencing research by abandoning preconceptions on a given subject has been roundly criticised by those preferring a humanist or feminist approach, who believe that it is impossible for a researcher to eliminate pre-existing biases and assumptions from their research. In the context of the current study, this was deemed to be a particularly salient argument. The researcher has previously studied alongside and has more recently taught to large numbers of East-Asian students, and in this time has built up a gradual understanding of the challenges they face when studying in the UK. Such experiences were part of the very reason to engage in a study of acculturation and can therefore not easily be cast aside. Also, whilst Lester (1999) argued that true phenomenological research is characterised by high levels of empathy, the researchers lack of exposure to other cultural settings makes this problematic to achieve.

Furthermore, Groenewald (2004) argues that phenomenological research attempts to accurately describe events without making reference to pre-existing frameworks, which may naturally have been based on prior researchers' assumptions. However, in the current study a key goal was to understand the experiences of East-Asian students with reference to the bi-dimensional acculturation model proposed by Berry (1980). Therefore it was concluded that although the phenomenological approach offers promise in terms of focusing on the actual experiences of individuals, those could still be achieved via a more pragmatic stance which is also more accepting of prior values held by the researcher.

4.4 Research Approach

The research approach adopted in any study concerns how theory and data are connected within the research (Morgan, 2007). Whilst researchers have previously been encouraged to clearly outline their allegiance to either a deductive approach (whereby existing theory is tested with new data) or an inductive approach (where data is used to develop new theories), it has recently been suggested that this may be an unnecessary step:

Insofar as it is useful to attach these approaches to the different research philosophies, the deductive approach owes more to positivism and the inductive approach to phenomenology, although we believe that such labelling is potentially misleading and of no practical value

(Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2000, p. 87)

The same authors also argued that a key determinant of the deductive/inductive decision was reviewing the amount of existing literature in the field. Whilst a large and established body of knowledge lends itself to a deductive approach through hypothesis testing, smaller, less-established subject areas may be best served through a more inductive approach, which allows the researcher to start with a 'blank canvas' and develop new theories based upon their findings.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, pragmatists tend to avoid labelling studies as either 'deductive' or 'inductive', instead opting for what Saunders, Lewis

and Thornhill (2000) describe as a 'middle ground' between the two. The pragmatist position on research approach is well summarised by Goles and Hirschheim (2000):

Pragmatists believe that there is an objective reality, existing externally to the individual. However, this is grounded in the environment and experience of each individual and can only be imperfectly understood

(Goles and Hirschheim, 2000, p. 261)

Similarly, Schutz (1962) had earlier stated the pragmatist belief that knowledge is shaped by human action; whilst an external reality exists this is largely shaped by what individuals can and cannot do, a viewpoint that led him to suggest that pragmatists should not rigidly follow either a deductive or inductive approach. Indeed, the practice of 'sliding between' approaches has been seen as central to combining research methods (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). Morgan (2007) has classified this 'middle ground' between induction and deduction as 'abduction', and claimed that researchers naturally move more loosely between theory and data, yet often conceal this process when writing up research for publication. Morgan (2007) further stated that abduction is particularly common in sequential mixed methods studies: as will be discussed in Section 4.5, this study will utilise a mixed methods approach including both quantitative and qualitative research, techniques which lend themselves to a combination of deductive and inductive approaches.

This chapter has so far introduced intersubjectivity and abduction as two key issues driving pragmatic research. The final key issue presented by Morgan (2007) in his framework concerns the inferences that are made from data collected (see Table 14). As mentioned in Section 4.3, pragmatism does not place an emphasis on producing generalisable findings. Again, the bi-polar alternatives offered in qualitative and quantitative approaches have come under criticism:

I do not believe that it is possible for research results to be either so unique that they have no implications whatsoever for other actors in other settings or so generalised that they apply in every possible historical and cultural setting

(Morgan, 2007, p. 72)

Instead, Morgan (2007) refers to 'transferability', which suggests that it is up to the researcher to decide to what extent the findings can be applied to alternative environments. Therefore a discussion as to the transferability of the current study's findings is only appropriate as part of the final discussion.

	Qualitative Approach	Quantitative Approach	Pragmatic Approach
Connection of theory and data	Induction	Deduction	Abduction
Relationship to research process	Subjectivity	Objectivity	Intersubjectivity
Inference from data	Context	Generality	Transferability

Table 14: A Pragmatic Alternative to the Key Issues in Social Science Research Methodology (Morgan, 2007, p. 71)

4.5 Research Methodology

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), methodology concerns the theory of how the research should be undertaken, and in particular the method or methods that are to be adopted. For a pragmatist, the choice of the correct data collection tools is the single most important part of the process (Goldkuhl, 2004). As pragmatic researchers empathise with both objective and subjective views of knowledge proposed by positivists and interpretivists respectively (Rocco et al., 2003), it is not surprising that many combine research methods traditionally associated with any one paradigm. As Tapio (1996) stated: "Pragmatists do not have a clear method in mind because the method itself is to be questioned and negotiated... there should be interaction between the parts of the method" (p. 457).

As has been mentioned throughout this chapter, the current study will utilise a mixed methods approach, hereby defined as "one in which the

researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic ground” (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) further stated that mixed methods research designs: “include at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words), where neither type of method is inherently linked to any particular inquiry paradigm” (p. 256). Rocco et al. (2003) highlighted that a key purpose behind mixed methods research is that of triangulation: using a variety of methods to collect data on a particular issue and looking for convergence between each method’s findings (Collis and Hussey, 2003). However, in the current study the underlying purpose for using mixed methods is that of ‘development’ (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989; Rocco et al., 2003). Here, the “results from one method help develop or inform the other method” (Rocco et al., 2003, p.259), a benefit which certainly applies to this research design, as the results of stage one will help in both the design and sampling for stage two (discussed in Chapter Five).

According to Creswell (2003), mixed methods studies can be classified as either sequential, whereby data collection methods are conducted one after another, or concurrent, where all data is collected in the same time period. The same author also noted that in smaller research projects a sequential approach is often the easiest to implement due to the time constraints of the researcher. A sequential mixed methods design is proposed to answer the research questions of this study. Although not previously applied to studies of acculturation and CCB, it has been

reported that mixed methods approaches are becoming increasingly common as researchers become aware of the flaws inherent in any one method (Rocco et al., 2003). Indeed, Jick (1979) had earlier suggested that “qualitative and quantitative methods should be viewed as complementary rather than rival camps” (p. 602).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, academics in the field have called for a combination of methods to gain a better understanding of acculturation (Nwankwo and Lindridge, 1998). Indeed, it has been argued that qualitative research is particularly suited to cultural studies, owing to the differing values systems between groups (Kiessling and Harvey, 2005). In combination with the historically preferred quantitative approaches to studying acculturation and CCB, it is hoped that adding a more qualitative element to the research design will enhance the potential usefulness of the findings to academics and practitioners alike.

It has been noted that the most common form of mixed methods design involves firstly a quantitative survey, and then more qualitative methods in the second stage to explain findings and answer other research questions (Rocco et al., 2003; Ivankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006):

it is perfectly possible, and even advantageous to use both qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting data. For example, a questionnaire survey providing quantitative data could be accompanied by a few in-depth interviews to provide qualitative insights and illuminations

(Collis and Hussey, 2003, p. 77)

As will be discussed in Chapter Five, the current study will follow a similar outline to that described above, with an additional exploratory focus group being conducted before the two formal stages of data collection. This process has been followed because a review of the research questions in Section 3.10 suggests that different methods are required to answer these questions thoroughly. Whilst Research Question 1 is investigating the potential existence of a relationship between acculturation styles and CCB and thus lends itself to a quantitative line of enquiry, the remaining questions require more detailed explanations from respondents and are best addressed through the use of semi-structured interviews. This is illustrated in Figure 17 below:

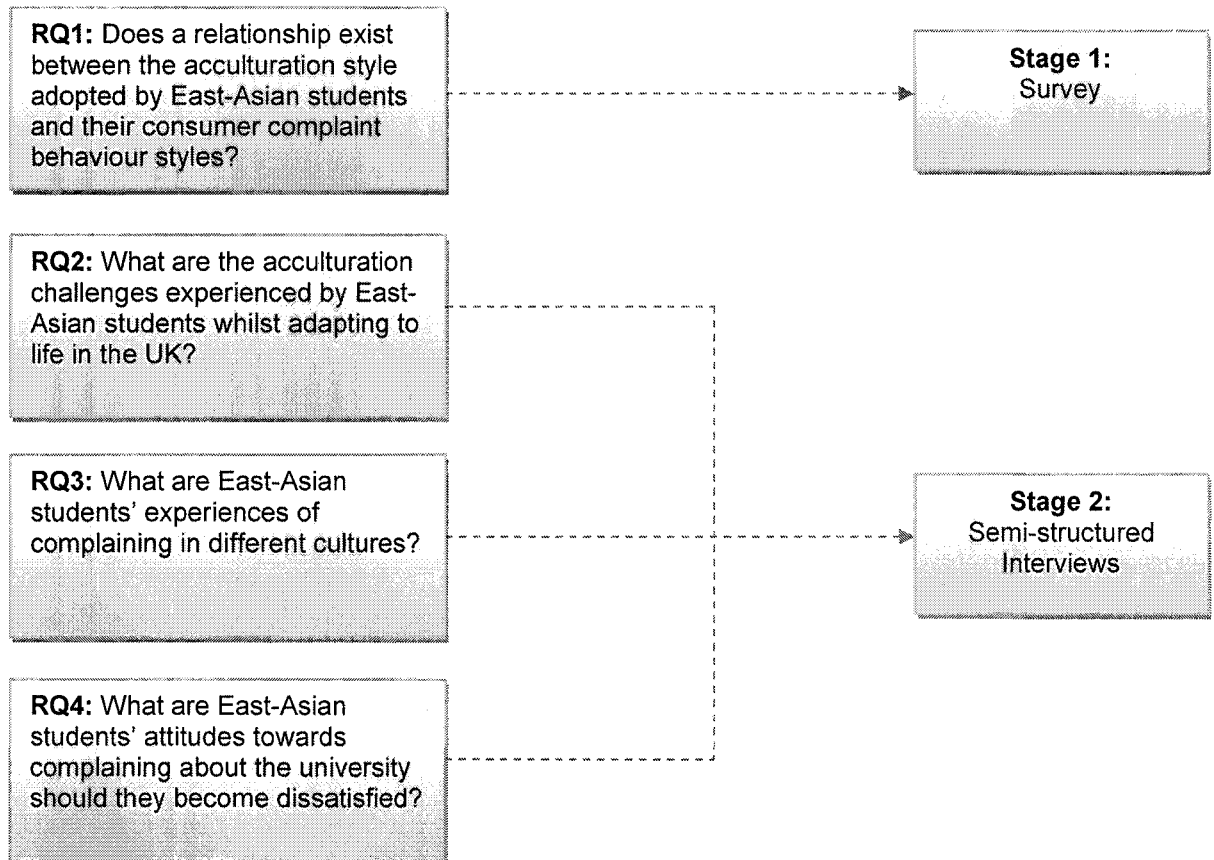


Figure 17: Research Questions and Proposed Methods

Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) recommend that separate research questions are written for the qualitative and quantitative elements of mixed methods studies, and also suggest that researchers consider how the two sets of data may complement each other. In this study, any issues that arise from both the survey and interview data will be integrated throughout data analysis and discussion.

An important element of any mixed methods design is the weight of importance attached to each technique utilised (Creswell, 2003). Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) noted that the majority of mixed methods studies used qualitative data to help explain findings from quantitative

data, which suggests a priority weighting towards more positivist research. However, in line with the recommendations of the same authors, it is intended that both stages of design and collection will be of equal value to the current study. Stage one will allow for the analysis of quantitative data and the suitable sampling of respondents for stage two, which will provide more detailed insights based on individual's experiences.

Another key issue in mixed methods designs is clearly highlighting at what point the two methods will be integrated (Creswell [2003] suggested that this can occur at data collection, analysis or discussion). Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) conducted a review of mixed methods studies across various fields and noted that only five out of 57 papers brought together the analysis from different methods, and urged future researchers to give due consideration to when different methods should be brought together. However, it has been argued that such integration is not always intended:

For example, when the mixed methods researcher conceives of a project as involving quantitative and qualitative components, each of which is designed to address distinct research questions, the prospect of integration may not be paramount in the researcher's thinking

(Bryman, 2007, p. 9)

As the above quote accurately describes the current study in its use of different methods to answer distinct research questions, the two methods are not to be integrated at the analysis stage. However, the methods will be integrated at two separate points:

1. **Sampling:** The interview respondents in Stage Two will be drawn from a database of respondents who participated in Stage One of data collection (recommended by Hanson, Creswell, Plano-Clark, Petska and Creswell, 2005, and discussed further in Chapter Five).
2. **At the discussion stage:** It is envisaged that the data will be brought together when addressing the research questions and forming overall conclusions.

In evaluating findings and drawing conclusions, Kiessling and Harvey (2005) highlighted that mixed methods research faces something of a dilemma; whilst positivists seek to generalise, interpretivists instead seek to understand the experiences of a smaller sample (Hogarth and Hilgert, 2004). Here they suggested that mixed methods researchers attempt to 'tell a story' of the phenomena under investigation. Given the often complicated nature of mixed methods research designs and the situational influences inherent in any study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), pragmatists do not place a great emphasis on producing generalisable findings (Goldkuhl, 2004).

Jick (1979) outlined numerous reasons for adopting a mixed methods approach, believing that it stimulates the creation of innovative methods and allows higher levels of confidence in results. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2000) further this by arguing that triangulation of methods can help eliminate what they called the 'method effect', ensuring that any results are a product of the concept under scrutiny and not the method

chosen. Jick (1979) also felt that mixed methods can help uncover deviant dimensions that have remained untouched in the previous literature. It is hoped that the sequential use of both survey and interview methods in this research design will lead to these advantages.

Despite the obvious benefits of adopting a mixed methods design, Jick (1979) did advise caution, warning that they cannot be used simply to cover up for poor research design. Such an approach can also be a drain on resources, and can be particularly difficult to replicate or be extended into different populations. However, there is a growing acceptance that overall the use of mixed methods is positive for academic research:

A field is strengthened when its researchers show an awareness of the weaknesses and strengths of each approach. Purely quantitative research tends to be less helpful through its over-simplification of causal relationships; purely qualitative research tools tend to be less helpful through their selectivity in reporting

(Rocco et al., 2003, p. 23)

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of the current study. This includes an introduction the different theoretical perspectives available to social scientists and the identification and justification of pragmatism as the paradigm guiding the current study. From here, a sequential mixed

methodology was proposed to answer the research questions developed in Section 3.10. Chapter Five will move on from this discussion to describe the individual research methods in further detail, and will also include a review of the target population and ethical issues relevant to the study.

An overall diagrammatic view of the methodological and method decisions guiding the current study can be found in Figure 18. This includes details of the specific research methods and tools of analysis that are discussed in further detail in Chapter Five.

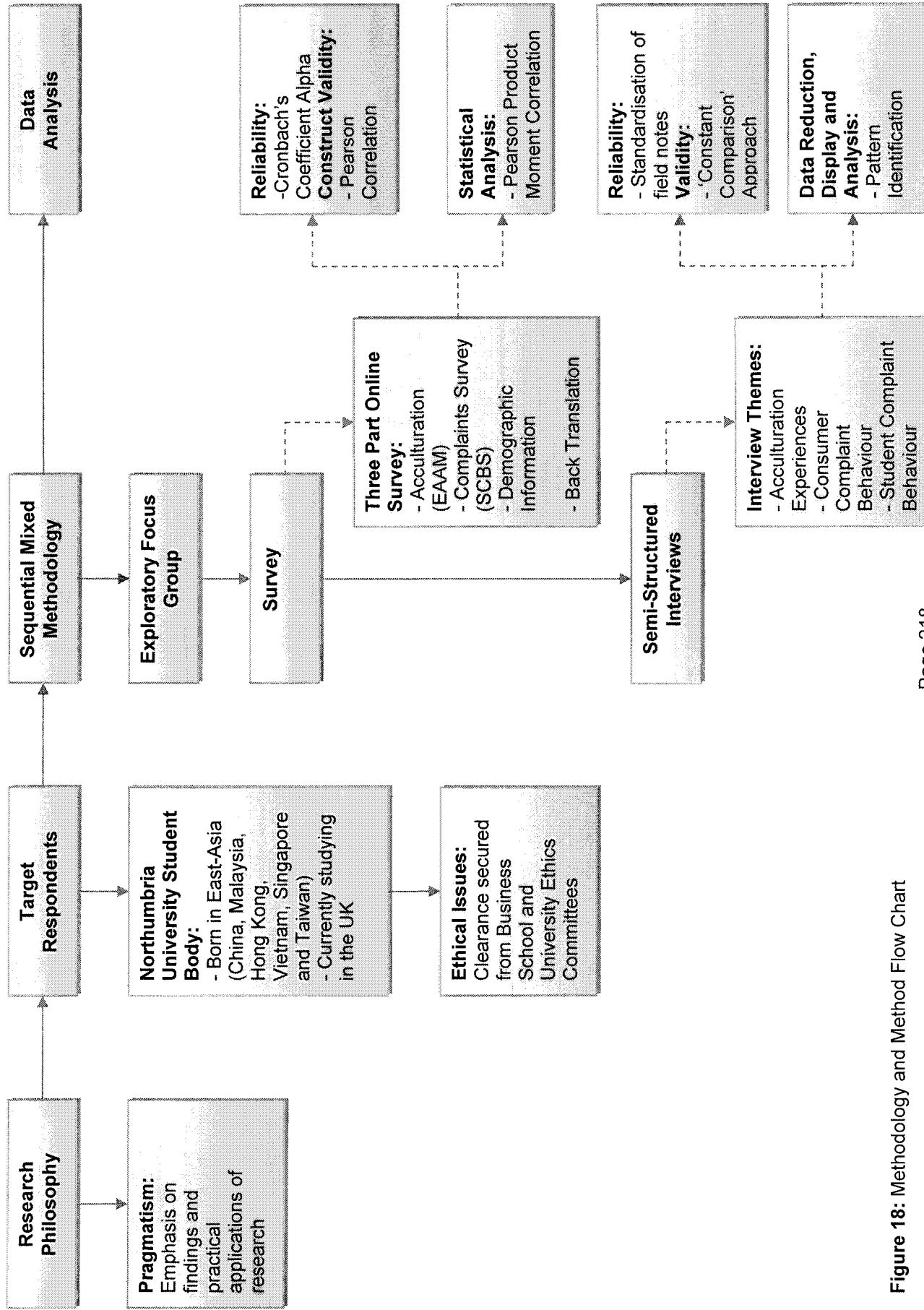


Figure 18: Methodology and Method Flow Chart

Chapter Five: Research Methods

5.1 Overview of the Chapter

Following on from the discussion of research philosophy and justification of a mixed methodology in Chapter Four, this chapter will initially review the target respondents that have provided the basis for this empirical study. From this point, the two separate stages of data collection will be outlined, including a discussion of key issues such as sampling of respondents, actual question design, cross-cultural barriers and effective piloting. The latter part of this chapter will also consider ethical issues relevant to the study and outline some limitations associated with the method design and data collection process.

5.2 Justification of Target Respondents

The selected respondents for this study were drawn from the international student population at Northumbria University for the 2006/07 academic year. Specifically, the research focuses on students of East-Asian origin (including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam). In total, there are estimated to be 2,350 East-Asian students at Northumbria that form the population for this study (Northumbria Facts and Figures, 2006).

With the exception of studies that focus on comparing different educational systems between the UK/US and East-Asia, relatively little is known about the acculturation experiences of East-Asian students in the UK, and their complaint attitudes and behaviours have not been considered in the existing literature. This is made all the more surprising considering the strong economic and cultural contribution this population can bring to a university (Sodowsky and Plake, 1992). Further to this, Lapidus and Brown (1993) investigated US universities and found that international students were not satisfied with the university experience, meaning they risk losing students to German, Japanese and Australasian universities. This argument seems particularly appropriate given UK universities' similar market position to the US in terms of attracting international students.

Throughout the subsequent discussion, it is accepted that cultural differences may exist across the countries listed above and therefore clustering these under the collective term of 'East-Asians' may be deemed an over-simplification. However in the context of the current study this was still deemed to be an appropriate decision:

- As previously discussed, the work of Hofstede (2001) is the most widely applied by other academics in terms of cultural dimensions and understanding differences between nations. The nations listed above typically have a high level of similarity across the 5 dimensions, with

scores particularly close on the 'individualism' and 'uncertainty avoidance' dimensions, which have been previously highlighted as being particularly germane to a discussion of complaint behaviour (Strahle et al, 1992).

- The respondents in this study can be clustered on the basis that they share the very similar experience of leaving their home country, studying in the UK and having to face the wide variety of academic and non-academic challenges faced by international students (e.g. Leung, 2001). Indeed, the initial focus group that was conducted (see Section 5.3) underlined that they face similar challenges throughout their sojourn.
- Previous research on cross-cultural complaint behaviour has found evidence that East-Asians tend to behave in a similar manner when dissatisfied regardless of their country of origin. For example, studies based on Mainland Chinese (Thorelli, 1982; Raven and Foxman, 1994), Taiwanese (Huang, 1994), Hong Kong (Le Claire. 1992) and even Korean (Liu and McClure, 2001) consumers have all concluded that whilst public complaining is deemed inappropriate, private complaining amongst close friends and family is by far the preferred response amongst dissatisfied consumers.
- Many other studies (particular those that focus on international students and associated pedagogic issues) have previously clustered different nationalities under the term 'East-Asian' to reflect the similar

approaches to teaching and learning in these countries. For example, Littlewood (1999) clustered Cambodians, Japanese and Chinese respondents in a study of autonomy in learning, and Leung (2002) grouped the nations of Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Singapore when looking at mathematics achievement. In addition, acculturation scales have been specifically designed for East-Asian populations as well as for individual nations (Barry, 2001).

As will be discussed in Chapter Six, country of origin did not appear to significantly affect responses on either the EAAM or SCBS, which further suggests that it was appropriate to cluster these nationalities for the purposes of this study.

Despite a recent growth in international student numbers at Northumbria University, UK students still account for 84% of the overall student population and as such tend to dominate campus life. In addition, the majority of individuals they will encounter in off-campus situations such as using local services will be from the UK, and therefore the acculturation process will see them adapting to the cultural values held by UK residents. According to Hofstede's dimensions (2001) the most significant cultural differences between the UK and East-Asian countries lie on the dimensions of individualism and long-term orientation, differences which may be the cause

of some confusion to East-Asian students. A review of common problems experienced by international students in the UK can be found in Section 2.6.

Within the study, the possibility of benchmarking East-Asian students' complaint behaviours against that of UK students was also considered. This would have involved utilising the sort of cross-cultural comparison of complaint behaviour that has been adopted by authors such as Liu and McClure (2001) and Ngai et al (2007). It is accepted that such a comparison would provide a clearer picture of differences in student complaint behaviours across nationalities. However, previous studies comparing Western and Eastern countries (some of which utilising student samples) have already provided extensive evidence that significant differences exist in complaint behaviours across cultures (see Section 3.6). Therefore it was felt that the current study should instead focus on the acculturation and complaint behaviour experiences of the East-Asian student population of the university.

5.3 Exploratory Focus Group: Introduction and Justification

Prior to the formal data collection process, it was felt that some form of first hand contact with the proposed target population would aid the researcher in gaining an initial insight into their acculturation and CCB experiences, as well as providing some experience of engaging international students in the research process. It was felt that conducting a focus group would be the most

effective means of achieving this, as it would allow simultaneous access to a number of international students and thus a mixture of participant views on the topics to be addressed. The overall aims and objectives of the focus group can be seen in Figure 19:

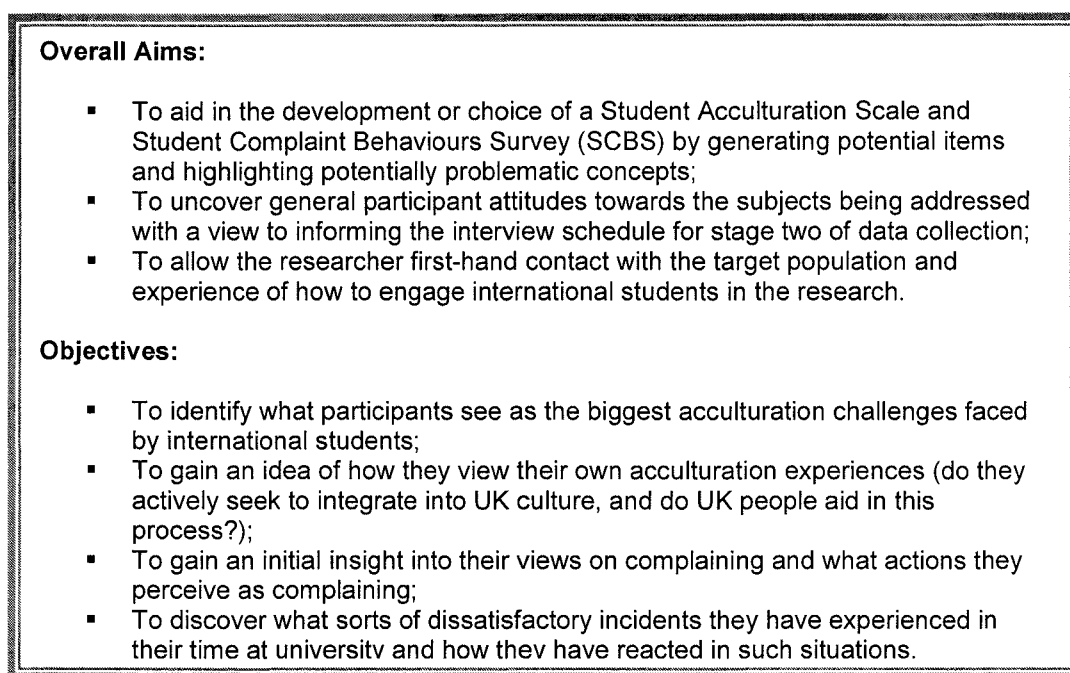


Figure 19: Focus Group Aims and Objectives

For the purposes of this discussion, a focus group interview is defined as “an unstructured, free-flowing interview with a small group of people” (Zikmund, 2000, p. 108). As a data collection tool, focus groups were initially used as a form of gaining military intelligence; however they have now been employed by social scientists for approximately 60 years. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), focus groups were first used in the business and marketing field to assess public opinion on US radio commercials.

Morgan (1996) highlighted that focus groups have become an increasingly common element of academic research, and identified three potential means of incorporating them into a research study:

1. Focus Groups used primarily to gain initial insights from the target population and generate potential items for use in other research activity;
2. Surveys used as primary method, with focus groups used subsequently as a means of interpreting survey results;
3. Focus groups as a primary method of data collection, with surveys used as a secondary measure for purposes of triangulation.

In this study, it was apparent that the role of the focus group was best aligned to option 1, which is generally recognised as the most common means of combining focus groups with quantitative research (Morgan, 1996).

The use of a focus group for initial exploration of the target population was deemed particularly appropriate as it is a relatively brief and straightforward form of data collection (Zikmund, 2000). The same author also posited that due to their inherent flexibility, they allow for discussion of numerous unrelated topics, particularly relevant here as the concepts of acculturation and CCB originate from separate bodies of literature. Here, care had to be

taken to provide a smooth transition between the two areas, as a sudden leap from one topic to another may confuse and alienate the participants.

Perhaps the most widely agreed benefit of the focus group is that of synergism (Keown, 1983; Welch, 1985; Zikmund, 2000). The group often turns into more of a 'brainstorming' session and thus lends itself to a role of item generation (Welch, 1985). Such sessions allow the opportunity to compare individual viewpoints on a real-time basis, and thus can help the researcher highlight genuine themes (or areas of 'group consensus') to take forward into future data collection (Morgan, 1996).

The focus group is also recognised by Morgan (1996) as a means of bridging the gap between researcher and participants, as it allows for the development of a more informal atmosphere which is difficult to recreate when using other data collection techniques. This was deemed particularly relevant in a HE setting, where respondents may have initial doubts over discussing university issues with an academic member of staff for fear of it impacting upon future academic grades.

However, researchers also require an awareness of the drawbacks associated with this method of data collection. As the method generally involves a relatively small number of participants the findings are hard to generalise across a wider population (Keown, 1983; Zikmund, 2000).

However, Furmonsky (1997) is keen to emphasise that focus groups, provided they are executed professionally, are as rigid as other forms of qualitative research, and consequently their findings can be treated every bit as seriously. In this case the focus group was not intended to provide generalisable findings, and more emphasis was on idea and item generation.

Other limitations of focus groups concern more operational issues. Zikmund (2000) highlighted that poor moderation skills can pose significant problems: for example, one participant may dominate the discussion, leading others to develop a negative attitude towards not only that individual but also the topic being discussed. In such situations there is also the risk that group attitudes may become artificially polarised because of particular group members. Therefore the researcher needs to ensure that those moderating focus groups can engage all participants and empathise with different respondents' views. As Welch (1985) summarises, these moderators need not be psychologists, just good communicators.

There is also the risk that some topics may be deemed inappropriate for focus group discussion, perhaps because of their impact on individual respondents (Morgan, 1996). In this situation, the focus group was intended to cover topics that all respondents will have been exposed to (for example, studying in an unfamiliar culture), so it was instead hoped that this potentially sensitive topic would instead inspire discussion and reflection between group members.

Despite such concerns, it is clear that the focus group is a tool particularly useful in the initial stages of the data collection process. Indeed, Keown (1983, p. 60) sees the focus group technique as “an under-used research tool”.

5.3.1 Focus Group Mechanics

To ensure the focus group was conducted as professionally as possible, the procedure outlined by Welch (1985) was utilised to guide the researcher (Figure 20). This outlines a number of key stages and acknowledges the importance and complexity involved in recruiting appropriate participants for the exercise:

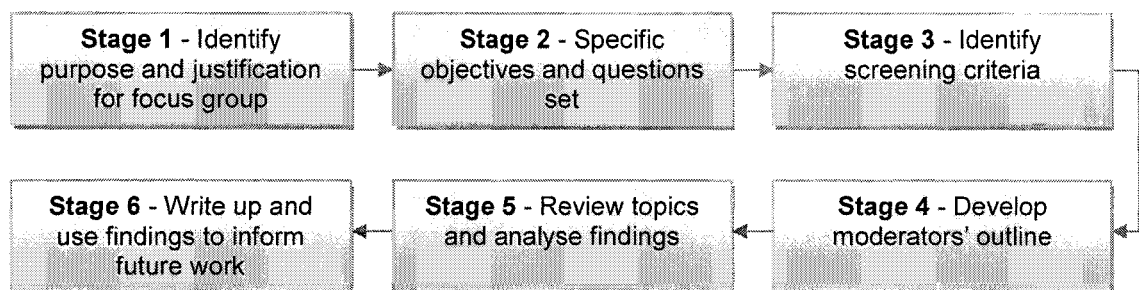


Figure 20: Procedure for Conducting Focus Groups (Welch, 1985, p. 247)

After establishing that the purpose of the focus group was to highlight relevant issues for subsequent survey and interview development (see Figure 19), a list of key questions was developed, firstly covering acculturation and then addressing CCB (it was felt that their own acculturating experiences

would be more effective as an ice-breaker between participants). These questions were informed largely by the existing literature and informal discussions with other international students.

In order to recruit students for the focus group, the researcher utilised contacts with the university's International Student Advisor, who holds a database of international students who have participated in previous activities or social events designed for the international student cohort. Given that no previous relationship existed between the researcher and participants, it was felt that using a third party would encourage participation by promoting the integrity of the research. Potential participants were approached via email or in person at the International Student Office – a total of five students agreed to participate, but unfortunately only three of these attended the event. This was a somewhat disappointing response, but as Morgan (1996) highlighted smaller groups can be more appropriate when addressing potentially emotional issues. As the focus group was intended only to inform future data collection tools and not contribute directly to answering the research questions, it was felt that holding only one focus group would be sufficient.

In terms of criteria for selection, it was crucial that the students were born in one of the countries addressed in the research programme (outlined in Section 5.2), and had enrolled on a course within the university.

A key issue in the development of this focus group was the existence of cross-cultural barriers and the potential detrimental effect this could have on the discussion. With the researcher being English and thus largely guided by traditional Western values, there was the potential for misunderstandings with participants. Further, as the target population covers individuals from a number of countries there was also a risk of cultural clashes between participants.

Sinickas (2005) felt that mixing individuals from differing cultural backgrounds could jeopardise the process if some cultures promote group discussion more than others. In this case participants were drawn from three different nationalities (Mainland China, Singapore and Malaysia), however given the level of cultural similarity between these nations this was not deemed a significant threat. Zikmund (2000) commented that some homogeneity within the group can be beneficial as it increases the initial bond between participants – despite their differing nationalities, participants in this study have all travelled to the UK for their education, and also enrolled with the same university so may have similar experiences to discuss. Further, Morgan (1996) has argued that increased use of focus groups with ethnic minorities in research suggests that provided the situation is managed by a moderator this should not have a negative impact on the process.

Furmonsky (1997) also tackled the myth that moderators from different backgrounds can pose problems. Indeed, he believed that this can lead to enriched findings, as respondents don't assume any level of prior knowledge by the moderator. This is certainly relevant in a discussion of acculturation, where the researcher has been exposed only to life and education within the UK.

The key questions developed on both acculturation and CCB formed the basis of the moderator's outline, which acted as an interview schedule to ensure all areas were covered (Appendix A). The focus group itself was conducted in a small breakout room located on the university campus; Zikmund (2000) highlighted the importance of utilising an informal environment to relax participants, so furniture was suitably arranged and refreshments provided. Participants were clearly informed as to the purpose of the focus group and were encouraged to interact with each other and elaborate on questions where they felt necessary. The researcher maintained a minimal level of involvement in discussion to encourage input from all participants, but in line with Welch's recommendations (1985) probed when any particularly pertinent issues were raised.

In line with the university ethics policy, all participants were made aware of the purpose of the focus group and their right to withdraw from the research at any point in the process. A transcription of the focus group was made

available to all participants afterwards, which resulted in no changes being made. The completed focus group transcription can be found in Appendix B.

5.3.2 Focus Group Findings

After the focus group was transcribed, a number of key themes were highlighted in the data which provided the impetus for specific questions in both the survey and semi-structured interviews. These themes are briefly discussed below with an indication of how they informed future data collection techniques.

Ice-Breaking topics: It was found that discussing student reasons for studying in the UK was a very useful means of relaxing participants and in particular led directly on to a comparison of approaches to teaching between the UK and their home countries. A similar range of ice-breaking questions could be utilised as part of the semi-structured interviews, and they logically lead on to both acculturation and issues surrounding student satisfaction.

Acculturation: A key factor in students' acculturation to UK life appears to be their English language ability, with some reporting a difficulty in communicating with North-Eastern students due to confusion over local accents. In terms of their overall attitude to acculturation, students appear keen to retain elements of their original culture and maintain close

relationships with their families back home, possibly due to the temporary nature of their stay in the UK.

In terms of interaction with the local community, students reported a disappointment that they were not provided with much opportunity to build friendships with local students. Indeed, it was felt that international students were often directed onto certain courses to minimise integration with home students, and this is not what was expected when agreeing to join the university. From this, it appears important to ensure that the acculturation scale includes items addressing both language and social relationships.

On a more academic level, the differences in teaching strategies employed across cultures appears to be a significant issue, and it may prove interesting to investigate if these differences (traditionally, Eastern cultures are associated with more didactic approaches to teaching whilst Western universities are characterised by more independent learning: Turner, 2006) lead to dissatisfaction with the university.

CCB: As a subject area, this instigated a high level of involvement from the participants, which reassured the researcher that it will be feasible to engage other students in this topic. A recurring theme of interest was a lack of co-ordination between different departments within the university – this was highlighted in examples of particular modules and also central university

departments such as finance. There was a general consensus that organisational issues were often a source of anger for students which could perhaps be investigated further through a specific vignette in the SCBS. There was also agreement as to the importance of word of mouth within the international student body, and this may prove a fruitful line of enquiry through semi-structured interviews. The idea that a formal complaint may negatively affect future grades was also raised so it may prove interesting to investigate if student's attitudes toward complaining differ when dealing with academic and non-academic staff.

The above key findings were used to inform the design of the two key stages of data collection which will be discussed in Sections 5.4 and 5.5 respectively. As previously mentioned it was somewhat disappointing that more students did not attend, but it was still felt that the focus group managed to meet the objectives highlighted in Figure 19 and provided many potential lines for future enquiry.

5.4 Stage One: Online Survey

In order to test the hypotheses outlined in Section 3.10 a quantitative survey formed the first formal stage of data collection. According to Collis and Hussey (2003), a survey "is a positivistic methodology whereby a sample of

subjects is drawn from a population and studied to make inferences about the population” (p. 66).

Numerous previous studies that have attempted to bring together acculturation with marketing concepts have adopted a three-stage approach to survey development:

1. Acculturation Scale; either newly-developed or borrowed from the existing literature;
2. Instrument assessing the marketing issue under scrutiny;
3. Demographic Information.

Such an approach has been utilised by Khairullah (1998), Ownbey and Horridge (1997) and more recently Ogden (2005), and will also form the basis for this survey. Commencing with an acculturation scale will require international students to reflect on their time in the UK and may act as an effective ice-breaker. Given that the section on student complaint behaviour may be perceived as slightly more sensitive in nature, it is logical this is addressed later in the survey. Ending the survey with demographic questions has been suggested as the most appropriate way of obtaining personal data as respondents are more likely to give this information after spending time on an actual survey (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). This issue is particularly important as contact details are required for sampling purposes in

stage two of data collection. The various components of the survey are discussed more from Section 5.4.1 onwards.

In order for the survey to gain as representative a picture as possible, it was decided that a census approach would be taken, whereby every individual within the target population is approached (Czaja and Blair, 1996). As the survey was distributed via email, this incurred no extra cost and did not prove overly time-consuming. In total, emails and reminders were sent to approximately 2,300 current students, which increased the likelihood of gaining a larger response rate.

5.4.1 Acculturation: Use and Choice of an Existing Scale

The development and validation of acculturation scales has been widespread amongst academics, with acculturation being used as a variable to explain anything from consumer behaviour (Seitz, 1998) to mental health (Berry, 1980). Such quantitative tools illustrate the popularity of purely positivist methods in previous acculturation research. Indeed, the fact that academics have been unable to agree on a standardised measure of acculturation underlines the need for further work in this area. From this, it was initially intended that this study would incorporate the development of a new acculturation scale for East-Asian students studying in the UK.

However, the eventual decision to utilise an acculturation scale from the existing literature (as opposed to constructing a new scale) was made for several reasons. Upon further investigation of the processes involved in scale development (Schrauf and Navarro [2005] pointed towards the lengthy process of item generation, format development, scale validation and factor analysis), it was felt that the process would prove to be very resource intensive and may detract attention from the actual research questions. In addition to this, the plethora of existing scales that have stood up to empirical testing has been developed for a variety of audiences (including East-Asian students), meaning any new scales would be unlikely to add to the field significantly.

On a more academic level, it has been argued that a fundamental problem with marketing research in general is a lack of faith in previously developed measurement tools (Churchill, 1979). Indeed, a review of the acculturation literature shows that researchers are continuing to develop new instruments as opposed to utilising previously validated tools. It is posited that an over-obsession with scale construction has impeded the actual implementation of these measures. Certainly coming from a pragmatic viewpoint, this appears a salient point with the emphasis being on the generation of data to answers the research questions outlined in Section 3.10.

In terms of selecting an acculturation scale for use in the study, a list of key criteria was developed, based on both the literature and the specific design of the present study (e.g. the target population). These criteria were then used to assess the suitability of a variety of existing scales. The criteria are outlined below in descending order of importance:

- **Bi-dimensionality:** A key objective of stage one is to break down the respondents into one of the four acculturation styles outlined by Berry (1980), a framework that has proved to be the most cited basis for investigations into acculturation. This breakdown of respondents will be a finding in itself and at the same time is crucial for the sampling of respondents for the second phase. Because of this, scales that treat acculturation as a uni-dimensional construct (a more assimilationist viewpoint: see Section 2.3.1) will not be deemed suitable for the survey.
- **Cultural Compatibility:** The chosen scale will ideally have been developed for use with an Asian population (although the country of destination may be the US rather than the UK). Schrauf and Navarro (2005) furthered this argument by stating that “the logic of validation and standardisation implies that tests make their most accurate measurements on samples that match the populations on which they have been developed” (p. 390). The use of a scale designed for an

alternative immigrant group (e.g. Hispanics) is likely to include items specific to their culture and as such may not be suitable.

- **Dimensions of Acculturation Included:** Although there is agreement that language is possibly the most significant determinant of acculturation (e.g. Deyo et al., 1985), the incorporation of many other potential determinants in scales acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of the construct. Given this, scales which include a wider variety of dimensions (in particular those with an emphasis on social interaction) would be preferred for this study.
- **Completion time and ease of use:** Ideally, the acculturation scale would not be so long as to deter respondents from completing the remaining elements of the survey. In line with this, the chosen scale would not be deemed to be long-winded, and if possible will utilise only one type of rating scale throughout the entire instrument so as not to confuse respondents (e.g. a simple Likert scale).
- **Seven-point scale:** In line with the importance of moderation in Asian culture, respondents from countries such as China have been found to provide less controversial and extreme responses when responding to Likert-style questionnaires (Roster, Albaum and Rogers, 2006). The same authors suggested that such a problem can be alleviated by

incorporating a larger number of response possibilities to each item (i.e. the use of a seven-point as opposed to a five-point scale).

- **Empirically tested:** Whereas it is unlikely that previously published scales will have produced poor scores in terms of reliability and validity, those which have been shown to stand up to empirical testing will be deemed more appropriate for this study.

In total, 20 different acculturation scales were rated for their suitability for this research, and were obtained either online or through writing directly to key academics in the field. The scales varied considerably in their date of construction (1980 - date), their purpose (consumer behaviour to childhood integration) and their origin (although mostly US based, scales were also sourced from Europe, Asia and Australasia). To ensure a fair comparison of all potential scales a matrix was developed which highlighted the characteristics of each scale, including the target population, number of items and specific strengths and weaknesses – this can be found in Appendix C.

Perhaps reflecting the dates of their development, a large number of the older scales were eliminated on the basis of their uni-dimensionality, meaning they failed to reflect modern thinking on acculturation. It is interesting to note that one of the most widely used scales (the SL-ASIA - authored by Suinn, Ahuna and Khoo, 1992), was later updated from its original uni-dimensional format,

supporting the appropriateness of using a bi-dimensional instrument. A significant number of scales were also not considered further because of their lack of cultural compatibility – many scales were developed for the Hispanic population in the US, and reflected issues that may not apply to South East-Asian students in the UK (e.g. Valencia [1985] includes an item on inter-racial marriage).

The number of dimensions tapped by the scales proved to be another decisive factor – many simply considered language usage as the only determinant (e.g. Deyo et al., 1985) whilst some contained such a small number of items that a variety of dimensions could not be tapped (e.g. Jun, Ball and Gentry [1993] produced a small seven-item scale focusing mainly on ethnic identification).

Taking these three main criteria into account, and checking for the remaining requirements (such as ease of use), it was decided to utilise the East-Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM), produced by Declan Barry in 2001. The scale was developed in response to a “paucity of appropriate measures” (Barry, 2001, p. 13) for East-Asian immigrants in the US, referring to the unidimensionality of most previous measures. The scale is a 29-item, multidimensional tool – here it differs from other bi-dimensional scales as it contains four sub-scales, each one focusing on the four acculturation styles proposed by Berry (1980) and determining which style is favoured by the

respondent. The items were generated through in-depth interviews with East-Asian students (as recommended by Franco, 1983) and validated through a survey of a further 150 students.

The EAAM proved to meet all of the criteria outlined above – not only is it bi-dimensional but it is innovative in its use of four sub-scales, it was designed with the acculturation of East-Asian students in mind, and taps a variety of dimensions, including language, social relationships, and ethnic identification – all of which were identified as key determinants of acculturation in Chapter Two. It follows a simple, consistent format of a seven point response scale, and at 29 items was deemed a more than adequate length for this study. The scale has been used by the author in further work in the healthcare field (Barry and Garner [2001] applied it in a study of eating disorders, whilst Barry and Grilo [2002] applied it to the study of psychological service provision). Internal reliability for the sub-scales is high – of the four the lowest was the Integration sub-scale with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.74, deemed a more than suitable score for scale development (Nunally, 1967). Full reliability information can be found in Table 15 below:

Sub-Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Average Item-Total Correlations
Assimilation	8	0.77	0.49
Integration	5	0.74	0.51
Separation	7	0.76	0.48
Marginalisation	9	0.85	0.57
Overall	29		0.57

Table 15: Reliability Data for the EAAM (Barry, 2001)

In terms of validity, the findings from the original study showed significant negative correlations between the assimilation and separation and the integration and marginalisation sub-scales (-0.39 and -0.40 respectively – Barry, 2001). According to the author, these results are “consistent conceptually with Berry’s model and appear to provide construct validity for the EAAM” (p. 196). This is reviewed as part of the data analysis in Chapter Six.

Once the EAAM scale was chosen, the 29 items had to be closely scrutinised to ensure that all items were likely to be relevant to the target population. Additionally, as the scale was initially developed for use in the US, some small word changes were necessary to ensure its applicability in the UK. As Schrauf and Navarro (2005) commented: “Fieldworkers often use existing scales found in the literature to measure various social and psychological phenomena... However, taking an instrument ‘off the shelf’ sometimes involves making adjustments” (p. 373).

Such changes were kept to an absolute minimum, as the process of selecting the scale was a rigorous one, and it was felt that any notable changes may compromise the original instrument (Schrauf and Navarro, 2005). The only changes made to the EAAM were replacing the word 'American' with 'English' or 'English people' – because of the scale's emphasis on items concerning language and social relationships this resulted in minor changes to a total of 21 items. Once this process was complete, the scale was ready for translation and piloting (discussed in Sections 5.4.5 and 5.4.6 respectively). The adapted EAAM can be found in Appendix D.

5.4.2 Development of the SCBS: Vignette Questioning Technique

Bryman and Bell (2003) define vignette questioning as a “technique which essentially comprises presenting respondents with one or more scenarios and then asking them how they would respond when confronted with the circumstances of that scenario” (p. 168). The use of such a technique was previously confined to experiential social psychological research (Alexander and Becker, 1978), but has more recently been utilised in business research (e.g. Slama and Williams, 1991).

Previous research in the CCB field has often asked respondents to indicate how they have responded to dissatisfactory incidents in the past (e.g. Bolting, 1989). This method places a significant dependence on memory of previous

experiences and can lead to inaccurate reporting of complaint behaviours which may have occurred some time ago. Singh and Pandya (1991) tried to overcome this barrier by screening respondents so that only those with a recent 'real-life' dissatisfactory experience were eligible for their study. However such an approach risks hugely reducing the potential number of respondents for the study, and still fails to capture the impact of specific situational and emotional factors, as summarised in the following quote:

Measuring CCB presents a conceptually difficult problem. Asking consumers to tell what they would normally do when dissatisfied with a purchase or what they have done in the past ignores situational and product-related factors which have been shown to be significant in determining the direction and intensity of complaining behaviour

(Rogers, Ross and Williams, 1992, p. 84)

As a result of such problems, Singh (1988) was amongst the first CCB researchers to suggest the use of a scenario/vignette approach. Here, respondents are provided with a short summary of a dissatisfactory consumer experience and then asked to indicate how likely to they would be to engage in the complaint behaviours discussed in Chapter 3. This method was used to develop Singh's (1988) taxonomy of CCB (Section 3.4) which has provided the basis for much future research in the area, and as a result other CCB scholars have been keen to adopt a similar question format.

The key benefits of the vignette approach, both in general and in the context of CCB, are outlined below:

- **Unambiguous, concrete responses:** As Bryman and Bell (2003) identified, vignettes “anchor the respondent in a situation and as such reduce the possibility of an unreflective reply” (p. 269). This point underlined previous work by Alexander and Becker (1978) which concluded that many attitudinal and behavioural studies were too abstract, whereas the use of vignettes presents respondents with a more concrete situation that can result in more meaningful data.
- **Elimination of personal threat:** At the same time as putting the respondent in a particular situation, the hypothetical nature of vignettes removes much of the threat from discussing potentially sensitive areas (Finch, 1987; Baker and Renold, 1999; Bryman and Bell, 2003). This can also mean that the respondent places less emphasis on impression-management (ensuring they appear positive in the eyes of the researcher) and as such will be less likely to provide biased results.
- **Multiple Complaint Behaviours:** The vignette technique acknowledges that consumers often engage in numerous complaint behaviours, either simultaneously or concurrently (for example, combining word of mouth and third party action: Hernandez and Fugate, 2004). As vignettes allow researchers to ask numerous questions per scenario, this allows the SCBS to investigate the various

potential student responses to dissatisfaction as highlighted in Figure 13).

- **Vignettes tap non-complainers:** Russo (1979) has criticised much work in the CCB field for only focusing on those who have directly complained to an organisation in the past. This means that other potentially damaging behaviours such as negative word of mouth and product boycott are not considered. As the SCBS does not require respondents to have recent dissatisfactory experiences, this ensures that all students can be investigated.

When using the vignette approach, the single most important issue is ensuring that the situations chosen are relevant to the target audience (Bryman and Bell, 2003). In this study it was crucial that the dissatisfactory incidents included were seen as plausible in the eyes of international students; failure to do this would risk losing the respondents' engagement. Further to this, situations should avoid using eccentric characters or extremely disastrous events as these result in unrealistic situations which may shock the respondent (Baker and Renold, 1999).

When some element of comparability between respondents is required (most commonly when the technique is applied in a quantitative context), it is important that the vignettes are kept simple and concise (Finch, 1987). Layering the scenario with multiple unnecessary variables makes it more

difficult to infer what caused the actual findings. In the SCBS, this was done through ensuring each vignette was worded simply and kept to a maximum of one paragraph.

5.4.2.1 Vignette Development

As highlighted by Bryman and Bell (2003), “significant effort needs to go into the construction of feasible situations” (p. 169). A key initial consideration was deciding upon the number of vignette questions to include, given respondents will have already completed the 29-item EAAM and will have demographic information to submit at the end. In line with the work of other CCB scholars (e.g. Hernandez and Fugate, 2004), it was initially felt that including five vignettes would enable a suitable variation of scenarios whilst still maintaining respondent interest. The first question was used as a ‘control’, and did not include a specific scenario to gain data on respondents’ general complaint behaviours. This ‘no reference point’ data acted as a bench mark and enabled the subsequent vignettes to be compared against the control vignette (as advocated by Rogers, Ross and Williams, 1992).

From here, four situation-specific vignettes were developed, derived from both the literature and findings from the exploratory focus group:

- **Assessment and Feedback:** This was designed to represent an extreme situation that would potentially evoke the strongest feelings of dissatisfaction, as it affects the grade received from the university. The vignette featured the student receiving a poor mark for submitted work and receiving inadequate feedback which left them confused and unsure how to move forward. Burke (2004) has previously highlighted that complaints are likely to follow assessment periods.
- **Course Organisation:** The focus group highlighted the prevalence of poor organisation as a cause of student dissatisfaction, a point also highlighted by previous research (Bennett, 2003). Therefore, the second vignette features a module where the student has suffered from the regular cancellation of classes due to staff absence.
- **Library Service:** This vignette was included so an additional university service that is closely linked with the academic element of university life was covered. Here, the student was facing a significant fine for a book which they were certain had already been returned. Given the financial constraints faced by students, the direct financial penalties involved may provoke a different type of reaction from respondents. In addition, as this vignette may involve students complaining to non-academic staff as opposed to actual tutors, this vignette may produce different findings owing to issues surrounding respect for authority, an explicit part of collectivist culture (Yau, 1998).

- **Online Learning Materials:** This issue was also raised via the focus group, and the vignette described an inadequate system which resulted in the unavailability of important course documents. However, after the piloting phase this final vignette was removed from the SCBS: it was felt that this was an organisational issue that was already tapped in another vignette and there was also the chance that the problem was confined to the university chosen for the study, thus limiting the instrument's future applicability. Removing this vignette also decreased completion time which allowed the whole survey to be finished in approximately 12 minutes.

5.4.2.2 Response Items

Following from the discussion of student complaint behaviour in Chapter Three, for each vignette respondents were asked to indicate their likelihood of engaging in ten separate complaint behaviours. These can be separated into four dimensions, as outlined in Figure 21.

It was felt necessary to divide 'public' behaviours between academic and non-academic staff. Due to the inherent importance of authority and respect in Asian cultures (Yau, 1988) it is envisaged that respondents may approach these two groups differently. An email alternative was also included in this survey, as it has been argued that the use of technology such as the Internet

has blurred the line between private and public behaviours (Liu and McClure, 2001).

Public (3 items) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Speak to a member of academic staff (lecturers or tutors)- Speak to a member of non-academic staff (office or support staff)- Send an email to the relevant member of staff (academic or non-academic)
Private (2 items) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Discuss with fellow students- Speak to family/other close friends
Third Party (2 items) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Speak to a member of student services- Speak to another third party (e.g. Students' Union)
Non-Behavioural (3 items) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do nothing- Consider leaving the university- Change attitude towards the university

Figure 21: Response Items for SCBS by Category

For the 'Private' dimension, it was felt that splitting this into two items was most appropriate as the two groups of people will differ in their knowledge of the university/issue causing dissatisfaction and their ability to offer potential solutions. It may be that whilst fellow students are experiencing similar problems and can offer practical advice, parents and non-university peers will lack knowledge of the relevant channels and thus may be more of an outlet for frustration as opposed to a source of advice.

Whilst both 'Third Party' items could refer to organisations within the overall umbrella of a university, as they are external to each of the University schools it was felt they could be classified as third party for the purposes of this study. The OIAHE (as discussed in Chapter 3) was not included as a Third Party option in this study, as awareness levels of the body are particularly low amongst international students and the small number of complaints handled each academic year (only 897 in 2006 – www.oiahe.org.uk) suggests that this is an option rarely considered by students.

Although previous researchers have attempted to include non-behavioural responses within the category of 'Voice/Public' (Singh, 1988), it was felt that non-behavioural responses required its own category in a university setting. Indeed, Andreassen and Best (1977) revealed that as many as 60% of consumers do nothing when dissatisfied with a product or service. Despite being slightly dated and not solely focused on a high involvement service such as university, the likelihood is this will still be a common response amongst the student body. It was deemed particularly important to recognise that on some occasions students may put isolated incidents down to misfortune and simply 'Do Nothing'. This is particularly salient within Asian cultures due to their belief in 'fatalism' – an acceptance of things that are deemed beyond one's control (Raven and Foxman, 1994).

For each of the ten items in Figure 21, respondents were asked to indicate the likelihood of them behaving in such a manner via a seven-point multiple rating list scale as depicted in Figure 22 below. As noted by Cooper and Schindler (2003), utilising a larger number of points on a scale can increase its sensitivity. Crucially, research has shown that those from Eastern cultures are less likely to utilise what they deem to be extreme responses (i.e. at the end of each scale: Roster, Albaum and Rogers, 2006). The use of a seven-point scale compensates for this by giving respondents a wider number of other responses to choose from, meaning they can show a real preference for one form of CCB over another without appearing too extreme.

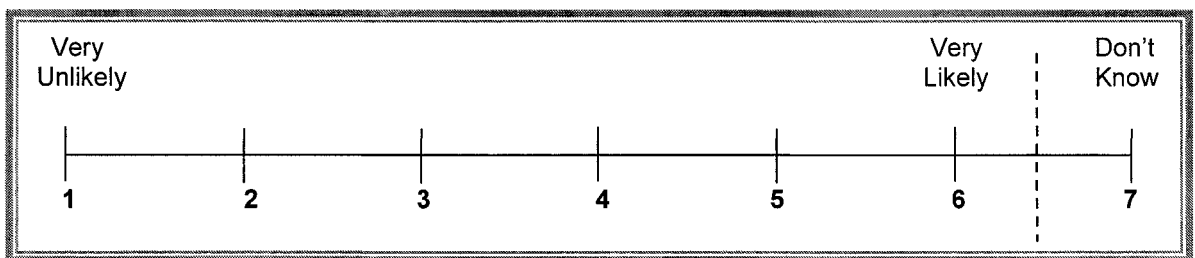


Figure 22: Multiple Rating List Scale for SCBS

The seven-point scale that was utilised in the EAAM (Section 5.4.3) differed slightly in that the 'neutral' point was included in the centre of the scale so respondents could indicate if they neither agreed nor disagreed with the relevant statements. However, with the SCBS the decision was made to include the "Don't Know" at the end of the scale. Given that the SCBS provided hypothetical scenarios, it was likely that the only respondents to use

the “Don’t Know” option would be those who were unaware of the item in question (e.g. were not aware of the help the Students’ Union could provide).

Also, Dillman (2000) has suggested that placing such an option at the end increases the number of respondents who will choose a more directional response. Dillman (2000) believes that such a structure provides “less of an invitation to avoid a directional response while still providing an opportunity for people who have no opinion [or preference] to say so” (p. 60). Although recognised as two completely different instruments, it will be interesting to compare the use of the ‘neutral’ point between the EAAM and SCBS at the analysis stage. The completed SCBS can be found in Appendix E.

5.4.3 Demographic Information

Once respondents have completed the SCBS (a total of 40 items across the vignettes), they move on to the final part of the survey which captures demographic information. This section was included towards the end as it has been suggested that attempting to gain such personal information early in a survey increases the chance of losing the respondent (Banaka, 1971). This was particularly the case for this research as contact details were requested so that a sample could be selected for participation in the semi-structured interviews. A list of information taken can be found in Table 16:

Information Taken	Justification
Name and Email Address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To enable future contact with respondent if required for stage two of data collection.
General: Age, Gender, Country of Origin and Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The various demographic details listed have been found to be relevant in studies of both acculturation and CCB (see Sections 2.4.1 and 3.5.3 respectively).
Length of Stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This was deemed a critical variable, particularly in terms of their acculturation experiences. Collection of this information allowed the researcher to ensure a reasonable cross-section of respondents had been recruited.
Course of Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This allowed students to be broken down into the different schools of the university – it may be that policies with each school may result in different attitudes towards complaining about the university.

Table 16: Demographic Information Captured in the Online Survey

5.4.4 Administration and Website Design

To ensure that the survey was as simple to complete and accessible as possible, the decision was made to distribute the survey electronically as opposed to other distribution methods (namely postal, face-to-face and telephone). According to Granello and Wheaton (2004), online data collection is a growing trend and has been facilitated by the development of various software tools to make the whole process simple for both respondent and researcher.

An online survey was deemed the most appropriate means of distribution for a number of reasons:

- **Respondent Access to the Internet:** All target respondents have on-campus access to the Internet and an allocated university email address which is available to the researcher and allows direct communication and promotion of the survey.
- **Acceptance of the Internet as a Data Collection tool:** Further to this, Granello and Wheaton (2004) pointed towards the growing acceptance of the Internet as a valid means of collecting data amongst highly-educated groups: a particularly salient benefit when researching the student population, who require a high level of computer literacy to succeed on their respective courses.
- **Improved Design:** The site can be designed to ensure that all questions are completed before taking the respondent to the next section (although to ensure this does not aggravate respondents all items included a “don’t know” or “neutral” option). Further to this, an independently designed site can be tailored to provide the survey in the language of the respondent's choice which may result in a heightened response rate.
- **Speed and Data Entry:** On a more pragmatic level, online surveys are said to speed up the process of data collection; according to Bonometti and Tang (2006) a respondent is likely to respond to an online survey within a week (as opposed to six weeks for mail surveys). An online survey also allows data to be transferred directly to a database, which

eliminates the need for manual data entry and subsequent problems around data entry error.

- **Availability of additional information:** Such an approach also allows the researcher access to other statistics, such as the number of website visitors compared to completed surveys, times and dates of visitors etc.

Although the use of online surveys has been associated with lower response rates than traditional mail, Schaefer and Dillman (1998) claimed this was not a relevant issue when dealing with a college population. In addition, access to email addresses means that regular reminders can be used to boost completion rates.

To ensure credibility with the target population, a domain name was purchased that was not attached to a more student-oriented survey development website. In addition, it was deemed important to separate the research from the university, as it was felt such an association may elicit a different range of responses, particularly with regard to student complaint behaviours. The domain name www.ukacculturation.co.uk was purchased and the survey was made available for a twelve week period from October 2006 to January 2007. A small selection of screen dumps from the online survey can be found in Appendix F.

The overall structure of the website can be seen in Figure 23: here, all respondents were greeted with a generic introductory page which covered the relevant ethical issues. From here, respondents were asked to choose from either English or Simplified Chinese (this is discussed in Section 5.4.5), were allocated an individual password which they could use to access the survey at a later date, and were then taken to the survey in the chosen language. A generic closing page thanked the respondent and provided contact details in line with university ethical procedures.

The target population was invited to complete the survey via a series of targeted group emails using the university's email system. Reminder messages were sent to these groups at three week intervals to encourage higher response rates. The web-based method also allowed the researcher to identify respondents who had started but not completed the survey. In this case individuals received a personalised message encouraging them to complete the survey and providing their individual password meaning they did not need to restart the survey.

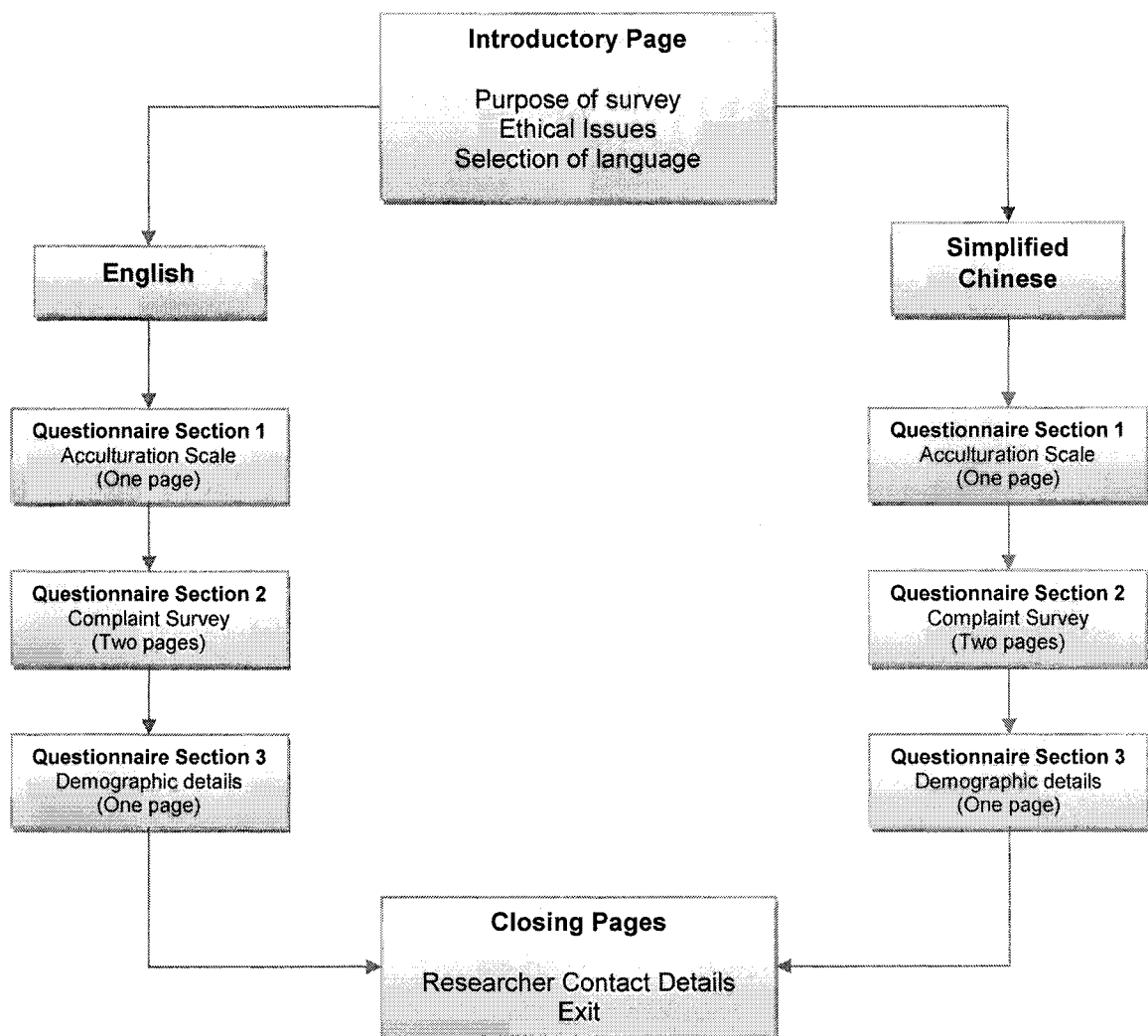


Figure 23: Website Structure for www.ukacculturation.co.uk

5.4.5 Cross-Cultural Issues: Back-Translation

As the study involves respondents from a number of East-Asian countries, it was crucial to ensure that the survey was equally accessible to all groups regardless of language barriers. As has been the case with many previous studies in the acculturation and CCB fields (e.g. Diaz-Knauf, Schutz and Almedo, 1992), this can best be achieved through offering the survey in a

choice of languages. If implemented successfully, this can result in increased response rates and a wider, more representative range of participants. However, Zikmund (2000) commented that translation is the single biggest challenge facing cross-cultural researchers.

The decision was made to offer the survey in both English and Simplified Chinese; the latter was chosen as this version of Mandarin is widely understood by people from differing Asian nations, including Malaysia and Vietnam. To ensure accuracy, a process of back-translation was adopted, which essentially involves “having one person translate the survey, then have a second person translate it back into the first language. This way you can see which terminology could be interpreted differently” (Sinickas, 2005, p. 12). To achieve this, an external translation company were employed and undertook an extensive proofing process which was then tested with the target population in the piloting process.

5.4.6 Pilot Study

Prior to launch, the three elements of the Online Survey were tested over a two month period. As Wilson (2006) stated: “Pilot testing involves administering a questionnaire to a limited number of potential respondents in order to identify and correct design flaws” (p. 188). In line with the recommendations of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), this phase

involved gauging the opinions of both experts in the field and target respondents, firstly via a paper-based version and subsequently online.

The piloting process for the online survey involved a number of stages as illustrated in Figure 24. Initially, following the generation of items for the SCBS, a paper version of this was developed in English and made available to a small number of potential respondents plus CCB academics who had previously utilised the vignette approach (as recommended by Ivankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006). At this stage, the emphasis was on gaining feedback as to the feasibility of the scenarios provided and any obvious problems with terminology. At this stage, the EAAM was not included as it was thoroughly pre-tested for similar issues by Barry (2001). From here, both the SCBS and EAAM were tested in paper format by approximately 25 East-Asian respondents with the emphasis now on testing time of completion and the suitability of the scales used.

The final stage involved moving the survey to the website and testing not only the instruments but the usability of the website and the ease with which completed surveys transferred to the database.

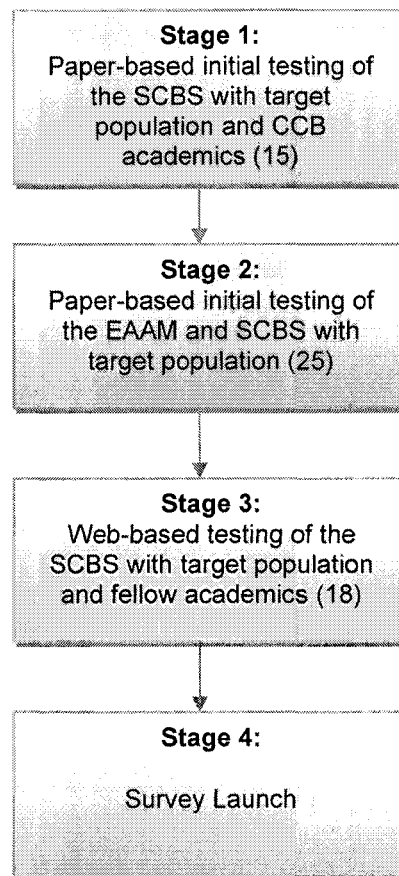


Figure 24: Online Survey Piloting Process (Number of pilot respondents in brackets)

After each pilot stage, respondents were contacted and asked to provide brief feedback on the survey. Some of the key areas of feedback included:

- Completion Time averaged around 14 minutes, which according to Bonometti and Tang (2006) risked losing the concentration of the respondent. To rectify this, a scenario from the SCBS was deleted to shorten the survey (as discussed in Section 5.4.5.1).

- Changes to some items on the SCBS: It was unclear to some respondents what was meant by academic and non-academic staff, so specific examples were given as part of the question.

No issues were uncovered regarding the back-translation process or the performance and usability of the website. In addition, feedback was positive and seemed to suggest that the choice of the Internet as a means of distributing the survey was a popular one with the target population.

5.4.7 Data Analysis Methods

As mentioned in Section 5.4.4, a key benefit of using a web-based survey is that the data can be automatically transferred to a spreadsheet or database. Data from all parts of the survey was imported into Microsoft Excel, from which it could be easily moved into the SPSS program (Statistical Package for Social Scientists) version 12.

Initially, data from each instrument will be subject to descriptive statistical analysis to enable the researcher to become familiar with the data. From here, a range of statistical tests will be employed to test the hypotheses highlighted in Chapter Three. This will be done primarily via Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, given that both the EAAM and SCBS will produce interval data. Various additional tests will also be run to determine if

scores on either of the scales are related to respondents' demographic information (for example, independent samples t-tests to investigate any differences between genders: see Chapter Six).

Reliability has been defined as "the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials" (Carmines and Zeller, 1979, p. 11). The EAAM will be subjected to Cronbach's co-efficient alpha, which is regarded as the most important indicator of an instruments' reliability (Churchill, 1979). The instrument has distinct dimensions (the four acculturation styles), and alphas will be calculated for each dimension and the overall instrument. In line with the recommendations of Nunally (1967), alpha scores should exceed 0.60 to ensure sufficient levels of reliability. A discussion surrounding measuring reliability of the SCBS can be found in Section 6.4.1.

Equally, the two instruments will have to show evidence of their validity, defined here as: "the ability of a scale or measuring instrument to measure what is intended to be measured" (Zikmund, 2000, p. 281). Further to this, Jacoby (1978) argued that "The most necessary type of validity in scientific research is construct validity" (p. 92). For both the EAAM and SCBS, construct validity will be measured through producing correlations of each instrument's dimensions and seeing if the results conform with existing conceptual thinking on both acculturation and CCB respectively (for example,

it would be expected that the results of the acculturation scale would show a negative correlation between the opposing acculturation styles of assimilation and separation).

5.5 Stage Two: Semi-Structured Interviews

As discussed in Chapter Four, it was felt that due to the varied nature of the research questions drawn from the literature review, it would not be feasible to rely solely on a quantitative route to answer these comprehensively.

Therefore it was decided that the online survey should be followed by a series of individual interviews to address these questions. For the purposes of this discussion, an interview is defined as: “any interaction in which two people are brought into direct contact in order for at least one party to learn something from the other” (Brenner, Brown and Canter, 1985, p. 3).

According to the same authors, interviews have been used as a means of obtaining information since the 1940s. Arguably, the key benefit of such a data collection approach is that it allows the researcher to explore meaning. As Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) suggest, interviews offer the opportunity to understand relationships between variables that have been uncovered in survey research. Ideally, the interviewees will have some sort of intense recent experience that will form the basis of their discussion and encourage them to provide detailed responses (Banaka, 1971). In this study,

all potential respondents have recently moved to an unfamiliar culture, and discussion of these acculturation experiences may well provide further insight. Further, a well designed interview can allow more than one topic area to be addressed even if the link between the two may not be obvious to the interviewee (Brenner, Brown and Canter 1985), a benefit certainly applicable when attempting to combine discussions on acculturation and CCB.

The key benefits of utilising individual interviews in relation to this study include:

- The EAAM was useful in that it allowed individuals to be categorised into the different acculturation styles outlined by Berry (1980), however Nwankwo and Lindridge (1998) have claimed that due to the multi-faceted nature of acculturation, researchers need to go beyond purely positivist methods to truly understand the concept. This will involve obtaining clearer insights of the challenges faced when acculturating to both a new culture and education system.
- Whereas the SCBS only considers hypothetical situations in which a student may voice dissatisfaction, an interview allows discussion of real-life experiences and how the student responded to such a situation. This counters a key limitation of the vignette questioning approach in CCB studies.

- Addressing acculturation and CCB within interviews will also present the opportunity to assess the face validity of the instruments used in the online survey. For example, an individual who has reported an assimilation style in the EAAM will presumably be more able to discuss friendships with local students in the interview.

A total of 125 people completed the online survey and consequently form the sampling frame for the second stage. The decision was made to sample interviewees from online survey respondents to ensure that each acculturation style was represented in the interview process, which could only be achieved if respondents had previously completed the EAAM. On a more practical level, it could be argued that by completing the online survey, respondents have already shown an interest in the topics of study, and were made aware that they may be approached for a follow-up interview. Indeed, Ivankova, Creswell and Stick (2006) have advocated such an approach in mixed methods research.

A stratified random sampling approach (Fink, 1995) was adopted at this point: online survey respondents were divided into four groups reflecting each of Berry's (1980) acculturation styles (determined by the EAAM: see Figure 17 below) and a small number from each group selected for interview. After the process of piloting the interview content and structure, eight further interviews were conducted (with the initial aim to secure two respondents representing

each acculturation style). Collis and Hussey (2003) felt interviews that follow surveys should be of a limited number to ensure the researcher isn't swamped with too much data. On a more practical level, it is felt that conducting a larger number of interviews puts pressure on the timescales of the study.

Acculturation Style	No. of respondents reporting each acculturation style	Percentage (%)	No. of each acculturation style interviewed	Interviewee codes (used in data analysis)
Assimilation	10	8	2	F, J
Separation	45	37	3	D, G, H
Integration	59	46	3	A, E, I
Marginalisation	11	9	2	B, C
Total Respondents	125	100	10	

Table 17: Preferred Acculturation Styles and Interview Numbers

Potential interviewees were again approached via a personalised email, which reminded them of their earlier input via the online survey and encouraged them to arrange an interview at a convenient date. Whilst a number of potential respondents were unavailable due to assessment or working commitments, the response rate in this stage was more than satisfactory (discussed further in Section 5.6).

As can be seen from Table 17, including the two pilot interviews a reasonable spread of respondents by acculturation style was achieved. Inevitably, given

the larger numbers of those who reported as either integration or separation these were slightly easier to obtain. However, overall it was pleasing to secure such a response as this allowed further opportunity to see if complaint attitudes and behaviours differed across acculturation styles.

5.5.1 Interview Design and Conduct

In order to ensure that the interviews allowed respondents the opportunity to reflect on their acculturation and CCB experiences, it was felt that a semi-structured interview approach would be most appropriate. This can be defined as a situation where: “there is an incomplete script. The researcher may have prepared some questions beforehand, but there is a need for improvisation” (Myers and Newman, 2007, p. 4). In such an interview, the researcher uses his knowledge of the research questions, information gained from other interviews and respondent comments to tailor the exact nature of each interview (Wilson, 2006).

To ensure a level of consistency between interviews and guarantee that each research question was adequately addressed, the researcher utilised the guidelines provided by Banaka (1971) to develop an interview plan for each respondent. It has been suggested that such a thorough level of preparation is often evident to the respondent and can improve their perceptions of both

the researcher and the study (Dwyer, 1996). The key components of this plan are illustrated in Table 18.

Component	Details
Role of Interviewer and Interviewee	Clearly formulated roles of both parties, which can form part of the introduction and ensure clarity of interview objectives.
Information Available Prior to Interview	The plan includes the actual results of the interviewee from the online survey. These are not shared with the respondent however can help the researcher to guide discussion.
Outputs	What the interview is setting out to achieve: allows the interview to be broken into logical themes, which puts the respondent at ease.
Contextual Data	Practical information such as date and location of interview is included, which may help the researcher at the analysis stage.
Interview Schedule	The actual question schedule is broken into themes and allows the researcher to quickly record which questions have been addressed and make a note of key issues/quotes.

Table 18: Interview Plan Key Components (adapted from Banaka, 1971)

Despite being a somewhat dated model of interview preparation, it was felt that this structure covered all relevant areas and also emphasised the importance of having information relevant prior to the interview (in this case the online survey results of each respondent). An example interview plan can be found in Appendix G.

In line with the research questions for the interviews (Figure 25), it appeared logical to separate the interviews into four separate themes that would guide

the respondent through the process logically whilst also simplifying subsequent analysis. Prior to investigating the below themes, Banaka (1971) reiterated the importance of addressing three key issues at the start of any interview:

1. Restate purpose of the interview and research study;
2. Cover ethical issues and secure informed consent;
3. Indicate scope of topics to be covered (this was also done on the invitation email).

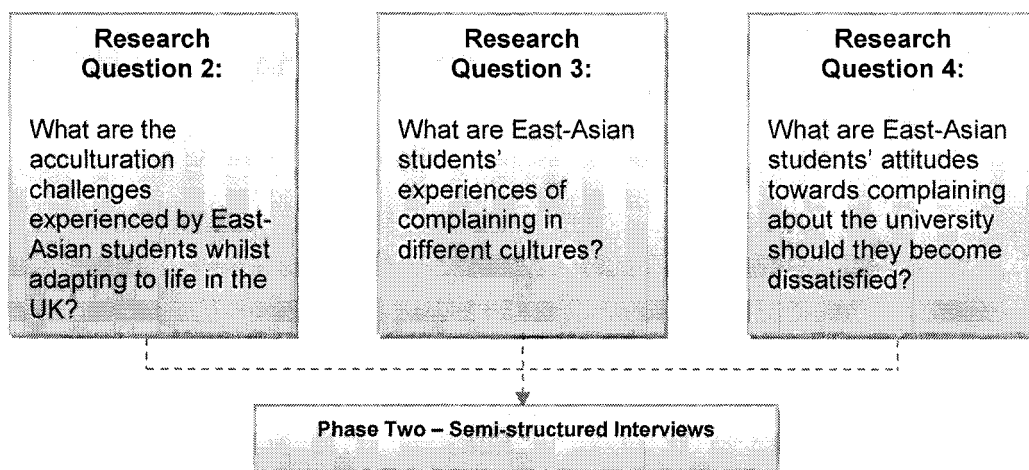


Figure 25: Interview Research Questions

Theme One: Ice-breaker: This involves the inclusion of a simple short activity or conversation designed to diminish barriers to effective communication throughout the remainder of the interview. In this section, respondents were simply asked to introduce their course and comment on how they were finding the UK educational system. This often led to a

comparison of teaching and learning styles between the UK and respondents' respective home countries, which served as a suitable introduction into theme two.

Theme Two: Acculturation: The term 'acculturation' was not explicitly mentioned as using unnecessarily complex terminology may confuse the respondent (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). However, this section did ask students to reflect on their adaptation experiences, including any planning or pre-conceptions they held before moving to the UK, how they have adapted or retained aspects of their cultural behaviours during their sojourn and their own evaluation of how well they have adapted to life in the UK. Following such a chronological order was deemed the most appropriate approach and aided the interviewee in reflecting on their acculturation experiences.

Theme Three: Consumer Complaint Behaviour: This section aimed to build on the findings of the online survey and gain further insights into respondents' attitudes to complaining in a general consumer sense. Here, the researcher probed for any dissatisfactory experiences (either in the UK or home country) and encouraged a comparison of the process. This section also aimed to understand if different cultures were characterised by differing organisational policies on issues such as refunds and replacements (as proposed by Blodgett, Hill and Bakir, 2006).

Theme Four: Student Complaint Behaviour: The interview closed by considering complaint behaviour in a university context. Further to the brief discussion of marketing's role in HE in Section 3.9, it was important first to establish if respondents viewed themselves as students or consumers of the university service. From here, the discussion focused on actual dissatisfactory incidents within the university and preferred means of expressing negative feedback.

The overall interview structure followed a similar outline to that of the online survey. Dwyer (1996) argued that it is particularly important that interviews follow a topical sequence, and where appropriate a 'problem and solution' technique should be used. This was applied to themes three and four, where respondents were first asked to highlight dissatisfactory experiences (problem) and then discuss the impact this had and how they responded (solution).

In terms of interview conduct, Dilley (2000) argued that teaching on qualitative methods overly-focuses on epistemologies rather than the actual practice of interviewing, a view that is certainly consistent with the pragmatic approach adopted in this study. Many of the guidelines below were taken from social science literature with an explicit focus on conducting interviews:

- **Silence and listening:** Approximately 80% of an interview should be spent listening to the respondent, and when necessary silences should be used to elicit more detailed responses (Dwyer, 1996). This proved a particularly useful technique when asking respondents to recite previous dissatisfactory experiences.
- **Effective probing:** another technique particularly conducive to investigating complaint behaviour; having a generic selection of pre-determined follow-up questions was a useful means of gaining more information on a particular event.
- **Comparison of responses:** As Dilley (2000) suggests, a key facet of semi-structured interviews is comparing what a respondent has said with the interview plan and adapting where necessary. Equally, the researcher should compare responses with that of other interviewees to identify recurring themes for subsequent analysis.
- **Encourage Respondents:** It is crucial that interviewees feel they have something worthwhile to add to the research, particularly for international students who may lack confidence with their language ability. As Dwyer asserts: "Remember to build self-esteem... Everyone, no matter how abstract their area of expertise, likes to hear 'You are special and I value that specialness'" (1996, p. 17).

Dilley (2000) concludes that "Good interviewing eludes easy definition or instruction, but we know it when we see it, for it opens new voices, new

vistas, new visions to our own” (p. 137). In terms of reviewing the process, the researcher completed a brief synopsis of each interview and used this to develop future interview plans where necessary, particularly at the piloting stage. This approach ensured that any further themes could be discussed with other respondents.

5.5.2 Transcription Details and Data Analysis

All interviews were held in a quiet area of the university campus, which provided a relaxing, informal setting and allowed the conversations to be fully recorded. Shortly after completion of the interview a full transcription was produced based on the tape recording, with additional notes from the interview plan being utilised where necessary.

Transcription has often been considered as a behind the scenes task in the research process, but in reality the decisions involved in the process should be given more credence (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005). The same authors saw two contrasting views on the transcription process: in ‘naturalism’, every effort is taken to record as much detail as possible from the interview, including laughing, pauses and body language. At the other extreme, a ‘denaturalism’ approach sees such idiosyncratic elements removed:

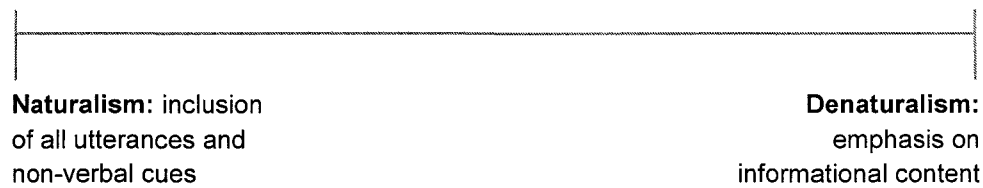


Figure 26: The Transcription Continuum (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005)

The decision was taken to opt for a denaturalism approach to interview transcription. This was primarily due to the international respondents and the nature of their communication; a review of tape recordings failed to clarify if utterances could be relevant to the topics under discussion or simply an indication of their limited language skills. Further, it has been suggested that a denaturalism approach may be more appropriate when the emphasis in data analysis is on information content (MacLean, Meyer and Estable, 2004).

Once the transcriptions had been completed (examples can be found in Appendix H) the data could then be analysed. According to Lee and Fielding (2004), the growing use of qualitative methods in the social sciences has forced academics to pay more attention to appropriate means of analysis. Indeed, the time required to analyse such data is often underestimated (Wragg, 1978) and there is no unanimous agreement on the wide range of analytical techniques available (Gibbs, 2002).

As Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) have noted, qualitative research often leads to a mass of data, particularly if the researcher has investigated a number of individuals or case studies. Therefore researchers need to follow a structured process to ensure that the most important data are highlighted and used to draw conclusions.

Miles and Huberman (1984) considered analysis to consist of three intertwining phases that run concurrently and in reality commence before actual data collection. These phases are known as 'Data Reduction', 'Data Analysis' and 'Conclusions: Drawing and Verifying' and are illustrated in Figure 27 below:

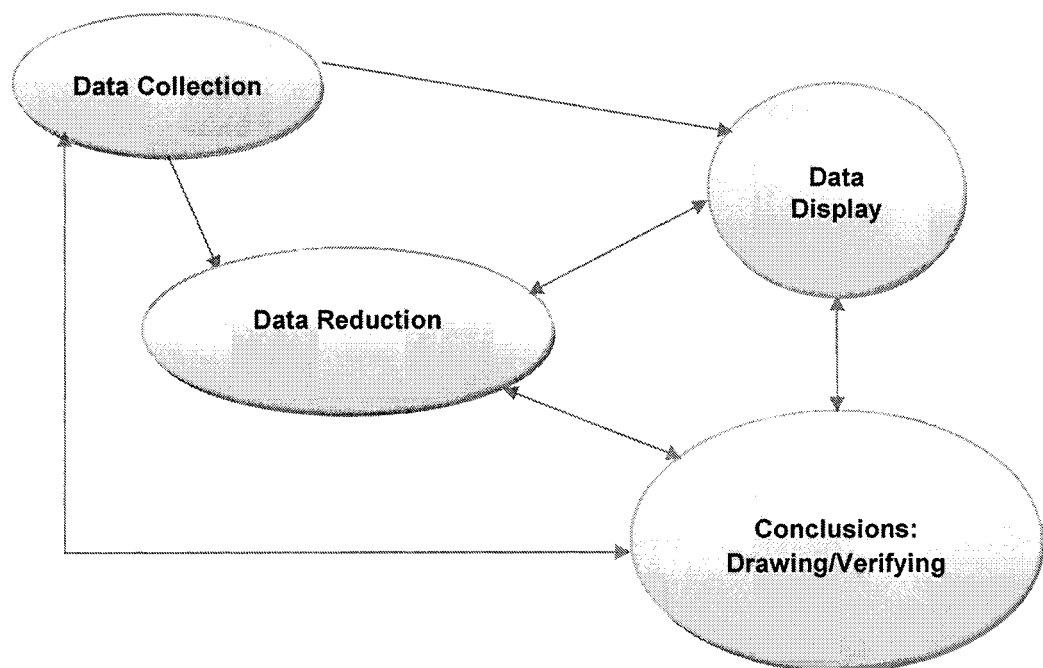


Figure 27: Components of Data Analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 23)

Theme No.	Research Question Addressed	Theme
1	2 - Acculturation	Pre-arrival: preparation and thoughts
2	2 - Acculturation	General cultural observations/comparisons
3	2 - Acculturation	Adaptation to UK culture
4	2 - Acculturation	Maintenance of original culture
5	2 - Acculturation	Biggest challenges faced
6	2 - Acculturation	Differences in educational systems
7	2 - Acculturation	Social interaction
8	2 - Acculturation	Evaluation of own adaptation to UK culture
9	3 - CCB	UK and Asian attitudes towards complaining
10	3 - CCB	Comparison of company policies re. CCB
11	3 - CCB	Dissatisfactory consumer experiences in the UK
12	3 - CCB	Complaining in an alternative culture
13	4 – Student CB	The university-student/customer relationship
14	4 – Student CB	Dissatisfactory experiences in the university
15	4 – Student CB	Responding to dissatisfactory incidents
16	4 – Student CB	Attitudes towards complaining about university
17	4 – Student CB	Preferred channels of complaining
18	4 – Student CB	Complaining about education provision in Asia

Table 19: Themes Developed from Interview Transcriptions

Data Display: This phase of analysis involves producing: “an organised assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking” (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 21). Whereas transcriptions or other typed text can be disorganised, cumbersome and can lead the researcher to reach rash, unfounded conclusions, presenting the data in a tabular or matrix format has been recommended as an ideal means of effectively organising data by relevant themes (Wilson, 2006). Such an approach allows the researcher to view all of the data in one document and where appropriate can aid in the process of drawing comparisons between respondents.

The data matrix developed for this study can be found in Appendix J. This document lists the themes and research questions discussed above in columns on the Y-axis, whilst the thoughts and comments of different respondents are shown on the X-axis. A small excerpt can be viewed in Table 20 below, demonstrating how this approach enables the accurate comparison of respondents' views. The full version of the matrix also includes a brief demographic summary of each respondent.

Concept	Theme	Respondent A	Respondent B	Respondents C
Acculturation	Pre-arrival: Preparation and Thoughts	<i>"Before I decided to study overseas I tried to know some culture difference or some difficulties out in my head. I know there are lots of difficulties but I have to face it. It's a challenge and you can learn a lot doing this experience."</i>	<i>"Yeah. Before moving here we need to consider many things like accommodation. As I think my English is not very good so this is a great chance to make me enhance to improve English, to speak more."</i>	<i>"For me, because I'm an optimistic student, so I've got a lot of friends and also got a lot of foreigner friends, they always taught me that you should go outside from China and have a look at the whole world so make a lot of friends outs and maybe it can improve your English – that's good."</i>
	General Cultural Observations / Comparisons	Commented on what he saw as a higher level of formality in the UK society, citing the example of having to book rooms and times for meetings. In China, this sort of thing would be arranged more informally.	The process was not a scary one as she travelled with a close school-mate who even does the same course. Initially, the respondent expected a big difference from at home but soon realised that the university ran in a familiar way.	The key things she learned in the UK were firstly that UK people are polite, and has used her positive experience here to change perceptions of those back home: <i>"I've already described a lot of interesting things to them. They are quite interested in UK people."</i>

Table 20: Excerpt from Data Display Matrix

Data Reduction: “Refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the ‘raw’ data that appear in written-up field notes” (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 21). Here, all interviews were listened to, transcribed, and reviewed for their accuracy. For each interview a short summary of key issues and quotes was produced: this was a particularly crucial step given that the combined transcriptions totalled over 50,000 words. These summaries contained an overall impression of the interview and were then broken into three sub-sections to align with the three research questions (acculturation, CCB and student complaint behaviour respectively). Example interview summaries can be found in Appendix I.

According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005), at this stage the researcher also develops categories that can be used to separate data and simplify the subsequent step of data display. After producing the summaries a number of themes were developed, based around the three research questions and the most common themes of discussion throughout the interviews (Table 19). The transcripts were then coded to find elements of interviews that could help answer the specific research questions.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Once the data is displayed in a usable format, the final stage involves identifying meaning, noting regularities and developing explanations (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Here, the same authors suggest a total of twelve different tactics that can be adopted, the decision on which to adopt depending largely on the research questions guiding the study. Of those proposed, the tactic of 'Noting Patterns/Themes' appears most applicable to this study; the data matrix that was developed is conducive to this form of analysis and allows the researchers to quickly note comparisons between respondents and use these in the subsequent discussion to form conclusions and offer appropriate recommendations.

As Miles and Huberman (1984) note, the human mind identifies patterns almost too quickly, so using the matrix data display approach to identify patterns ensures that any conclusions are based on actual data and not the potentially false assumptions of the researcher.

Whilst the terms objectivity, reliability and validity have been traditionally associated with the natural sciences (Johnson, Buehring, Cassell and Symon, 2006), social scientists have demonstrated an equal commitment to ensure that qualitative research is characterised by the same levels of rigour. In particular the concept of reliability, referring to the ability of an experiment to be entirely replicable, appears an ambitious aim for any qualitative study. As such, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that for qualitative researchers,

'reliability' should be replaced by 'dependability', (seen as the minimisation of researcher idiosyncrasies). One way of achieving this goal was proposed by Kirk and Miller (1986) and focuses on the standardisation of field notes. Here, relatively structured records are taken and throughout analysis, and the researcher reviews these in a self-critical manner to ensure that a sufficient (although not excessive) level of standardisation has been achieved. In this study, the development of interview schedules (based on the work of Banaka, 1971) helped to ensure that individual respondents were questioned in a consistent manner.

Silverman (2000) warned that validity can be compromised by the act of 'anecdotalism' – that is, selecting those cases/examples that help develop a consistent argument as opposed to including contrary evidence. For example, in this study such a failing could lead to the researcher inaccurately drawing conclusions on student attitudes toward complaining based on one or two carefully selected cases/quotes. To overcome this, Silverman (2000) recommended a process of 'Constant Comparison' be adopted throughout data analysis. Here, should one respondent present an argument, this should be 'tested' on subsequent respondents to deter whether the finding is valid in the eyes of others. Such an approach can be easily adopted in this study, as the use of semi-structured interviews allows further issues or questions to be added if required.

5.6 Ethical Issues and Response Rates

In any research project, it is crucial to consider the interests of those involved throughout the process. Ultimately, the goal of ethics in research is “to ensure that no-one is harmed or suffers adverse consequences from research activities” (Cooper and Schindler, 2003, p. 120).

In order to gain access to the target respondents, the researcher had to ensure that the university was aware of the research, its aims and the required contact with respondents. To this effect, a submission was made to the Newcastle Business School Ethics Committee (Appendix K) covering the following issues:

- Required contact with respondents;
- Means of securing informed consent for both stages of the research;
- Any particularly sensitive topic areas that may arise.

Subsequently, the researcher also secured clearance from the University-wide Ethics Committee, which ensured that students from across the university could be directly invited to participate. It was initially hoped that participation could be incentivised with a prize draw to win printing credits for university I.T. suites, however this was not approved by the Ethics committee.

For the online survey, respondents were required to agree to their participation in the research through ticking a box before commencing the survey. For the semi-structured interviews, consent was gained through talking the respondent through the ethical issues and then obtaining the respondent's signature (an example informed consent form can be found in Appendix L). In line with the recommendations of Cooper and Schindler (2003), all respondents were informed of the nature and goals of the research project, their right to withdraw at any point, and in the case of interview respondents the chance to review the transcript at a later date. Only two of the respondents took the opportunity to read through their transcriptions and this resulted in no amendments being made.

In terms of response rates, the online survey was sent to a total of 2,300 students and whilst 200 of those registered and commenced the survey, only 125 fully completed usable data sets were received (a response rate of 5.5%). This response rate was disappointing, considering the efforts exerted to encourage participation (summarised in Table 21). As Baruch (1999) has suggested, a key reason why people do not participate is hectic lifestyles, something which may well apply to students who may be juggling academic and working life.

Potential Barrier to Participation	Action
Language Barrier	- Offered in a choice of English or Simplified Chinese
Time Consuming	- Respondents clearly notified of time required from outset - Additional SCBS scenario removed to shorten completion time - Distributed online to save time on return postage etc. - Conducted at quieter time of the academic year in terms of assessments
Forget to Complete	- Reminders sent to those who have not commenced - Personalised reminders sent to those who had started but not completed with individual password
Too Complicated	- Simple 'tick box' structure used throughout

Table 21: Actions taken to improve Online Survey Response Rate

However, for the subsequent interviews, the response rate was far more encouraging: to secure 10 interviews a total of 46 students were invited (a response rate of 21.7%). This may reflect the fact that the interviews were held at a relatively quiet time of year (June/July 2007) or perhaps that those who completed the survey had a genuine interest in the topics being addressed and thus felt more compelled to participate. The demographic composition of respondents is discussed further in Chapters Six and Seven.

5.7 Research Method Limitations

In developing the research methods discussed throughout this chapter, it is important to recognise potential limitations and appreciate how these may impact upon the final contribution made by the study.

Within the online survey, it is relevant to consider that although the EAAM was developed for use with East-Asian students studying in an unfamiliar Western culture, it was done in the US and this may impact upon the appropriateness of this instrument for a UK-based target population. Given the cultural similarities between the US and the UK, none of the items were deemed to be unsuitable for East-Asian students in the UK, and minor linguistic changes were made where necessary; however it would still be of interest to compare the findings in this study with those from the US to note any significant differences. Also, despite holding acceptable levels of internal reliability and construct validity (Barry, 2001), the EAAM has yet to be subject to factor analysis due to the limited sample sizes used. However given that the instrument was developed based on the four widely accepted dimensions of acculturation there is no evidence to suggest that this should compromise the validity of the scale.

The SCBS utilised hypothetical situations to measure likely complaint behaviours in a university environment. Despite the apparent appropriateness of this approach in studying CCB (Slama and Williams, 1991), it has been warned that such an approach may result in respondents over-exaggerating their actual behaviours:

Any time behavioural intentions are used as a proxy for behaviour, there is an opportunity for misrepresentation of actual market phenomenon

(Hernandez and Fugate, 2004, p. 161)

As a result, the data analysis stage should carefully consider the extent to which respondents are implying a very pro-active response to dissatisfactory incidents (i.e. public complaining), as such results may be the product of the hypothetical nature of the scenarios rather than their actual intentions were the situation genuine.

It is also important to highlight that the SCBS does not uncover actual dissatisfactory incidents experienced by respondents. However, it is hoped that examples of these will be uncovered through the semi-structured interviews, ensuring that any eventual conclusions are not developed based solely on hypothetical situations.

In conducting the semi-structured interviews, an obvious issue to overcome was the potential language barrier between the researcher and respondents, who despite demonstrating a level of competence in the English language to gain entry to the university, may still find it difficult to interact comfortably with an English-speaking researcher. To this end, prior to recording the interviews each respondent was clearly briefed that the research was not intended to measure their language ability, and if they required additional time to

compose their responses this would not be recognised in the transcriptions (i.e. a denaturalism approach to transcription: Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005).

As part of the interviews also considered student complaint behaviour, there exists the possibility that respondents may be less forthcoming in their dissatisfactory experiences for fear they would be passed on to other university staff. This may prove a significant barrier to communication should respondents feel their complaints may compromise their future grades. To counter this issue, respondents were very clearly briefed as to the ethical issues in this study and were reminded that the interview would be anonymised at the transcription stage (Section 5.6). Further, the researcher was very clear to highlight that this research was being done not to share specific information with other university parties but for the purposes of a PhD study.

5.8 Chapter Summary

This Chapter built upon the discussion of mixed methodology in Chapter Four by firstly summarising the role and findings of an exploratory focus group, and then systemically discussing a two stage data collection process. For both the online survey and subsequent semi-structured interviews, this chapter has outlined the process for sampling respondents, designing and conducting data collection, highlighting intended means of analysis and where appropriate identifying limitations with the process and how this may impact upon the final contribution of the research.

From this point, Chapter Six will first present the analysis of data accumulated via the online survey, and include a discussion of how these findings impacted upon the interview process. Chapter Seven will then present the findings from the semi-structured interviews prior to moving on to the discussion.

Chapter Six: Data Analysis – Online Survey

6.1 Overview of the Chapter

The following chapter provides an analysis of the data collected via the online survey. Initially, a demographic breakdown of the respondents is presented, followed by an analysis of both the EAAM and SCBS. From here, the results of each instrument will be combined to test the hypotheses highlighted in Section 3.10. The chapter will conclude with a review of the key findings and a discussion of how these affected the conduct of the subsequent semi-structured interviews.

6.2 Online Survey Review, Non-Response Bias and Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

A total of 125 respondents fully completed the online survey and consequently form the sampling frame for stage two of data collection. This represents a usable response rate of 5.5%, which is somewhat disappointing given the efforts made to target respondents effectively and ensure the survey was easy to complete (see Section 5.6). It is acknowledged that such a response rate limits the extent to which any findings can be seen as representative of the population: as the proposed incentives were not approved by the NBS Ethics Committee there was limited motivation for

students to respond other than a general interest in the topics addressed. However, it should be reiterated that the intention of this study is not to provide generalisable findings, but instead to explore acculturation and CCB in a HE context.

Given the low response rate it was particularly important to consider the potential impact of non-response bias on the findings. Indeed, non-response bias has been deemed a particularly important issue in CCB as “non-response bias may be more of a problem than usual, as complaint behaviour and response behaviour may be related. Furthermore, respondents may differ from non-respondents in terms of their previous marketplace experiences” (Bearden and Teel, 1980, p. 10-11). Indeed, Feskens, Hox, Lensvelt-Mulders and Schmeets (2006) noted how this problem may be particularly acute when collecting data from ethnic minorities.

A common means of checking for non-response bias is to compare those respondents who completed the survey early and those who only completed the survey after a number of reminders. This test assumes that the later respondents have a greater level of similarity to non-responders as they were initially hesitant to take part and only did so after a period of time (in this case over one month). Such a method is similar in principle to what Nunally (1967) refers to as the split-half reliability test. Independent t-tests were conducted by splitting the respondents in half based upon when they completed the

online survey (labelled as 'Early' and 'Late'). Table 22 shows the comparison of early and late respondents across both the EAAM and SCBS.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
EAAM:					
Assimilation			1.18	123	.242
Early	3.34	1.01			
Late	3.11	1.10			
Separation			-1.28	123	.203
Early	3.81	0.90			
Late	4.01	0.87			
Integration			.49	123	.623
Early	4.21	1.11			
Late	4.11	1.06			
Marginalisation			.60	123	.546
Early	3.15	1.04			
Late	3.03	1.17			
SCBS:					
Public			-.310	123	.757
Early	4.45	0.84			
Late	4.50	0.81			
Private			1.68	123	.096
Early	4.83	1.01			
Late	4.49	1.21			
Third Party			1.33	123	.185
Early	3.65	1.19			
Late	3.37	1.13			
Non-Behavioural			-.107	123	.915
Early	2.63	0.98			
Late	2.65	0.80			

Table 22: Independent Samples t-tests comparing early and late respondents against Acculturation Styles and Complaint Behaviour Styles

Table 22 illustrates that although some slight variances in means were noted (for example, early respondents were more likely to engage in private complaining [4.83] than late respondents [4.49]), no statistically significant

differences existed between early and late respondents on either the EAAM or the SCBS. Given that the difference in completion date was up to three months between early and late respondents, it appears fair to assume that non-response bias is not a significant issue in this study.

Of the respondents, there was a near perfect split in terms of language chosen to complete the survey: 63 completed in Simplified Chinese as opposed to 62 completing in English, justifying the decision to offer the survey in a choice of languages. Overall, 200 people visited www.ukacculturation.co.uk during the survey period, meaning 62% actually went on to complete the survey fully. This may be explained to some extent by a hesitation amongst respondents to provide contact details in the final section of the survey. It was also interesting to note that 76 (61%) of respondents were female, most likely reflecting the fact that the slight majority (55%) of the overall student population is female (Northumbria Facts and Figures, 2008).

A breakdown of respondents by age and length of stay in the UK is provided in Table 23. It was particularly pleasing to note a spread of age groups responding to the survey: 47 of respondents (38%) were aged 24 or over, with the median age group being 22-23. Given the potential importance of age as a determinant of both acculturation styles and complaint behaviours, this breakdown allows the researcher to investigate this in a university

context. There was also a notable spread of responses on length of residence, with 49 (39%) reporting residing in the UK for over a year, and 15 (12%) reporting over three years. This spread of response may reflect the differing year groups participating in the study.

		Length of Stay							Total
		0-3 months	4-6 months	7 months - under 1 year	1 year - under 2 years	2 years - under 3 years	3 years - under 5 years	5 years+	
Age	18-19	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	5
	20-21	10	5	1	1	4	3	1	25
	22-23	20	8	2	8	4	4	2	48
	24-25	7	3	4	5	2	1	1	23
	26-30	4	5	1	5	4	2	0	21
	31+	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total		42	26	8	20	14	11	4	125

Table 23: Age by Length of Stay Cross-tabulation

Table 24 provides a breakdown of respondents by their nationality and religious background. As expected given the composition of the student base at Northumbria, 62 of respondents (49%) hail from Mainland China, with the majority of other students coming from either Malaysia (22, 17%), Taiwan (18, 14%) and Hong Kong (15, 12%). Seventy-nine respondents (63%) reported having no religious beliefs, with 29 (23%) of the respondents reporting to be Buddhist, and 15 (12%) Christian. Of the different nationalities represented in the survey, Malaysians were the most likely to report some religious background (55% Buddhist, 27% Christian).

		Religion				Total
		None	Christian	Buddhist	Other	
Origin	Mainland China	54	1	7	0	62
	Malaysia	4	6	12	0	22
	Singapore	1	1	1	0	3
	Taiwan	7	3	8	1	19
	Vietnam	1	2	1	0	4
	Hong Kong	12	2	0	1	15
Total		79	15	29	2	125

Table 24: Religion by Nationality Cross-tabulation

In the final part of the survey, students were also asked to indicate which course they were enrolled on in the 2006/07 academic year, and this data was converted into the breakdown of respondents by academic school illustrated in Table 25.

		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
School	Business School	70	56.0	56.0
	Applied Science	9	7.2	63.2
	Arts and Social Sciences	5	4.0	67.2
	Built Environment	6	4.8	72.0
	Computing, Engineering and IS	15	12.0	84.0
	Design	2	1.6	85.6
	Health, Care and Education	2	1.6	87.2
	Law	7	5.6	92.8
	Psychology and Sports	2	1.6	94.4
	Not Specified	7	5.6	100.0
Total		125	100.0	

Table 25: Breakdown of Respondents by School

Again reflecting the composition of the international student base at Northumbria, a considerable proportion (70, 56%) of students were part of the Business School, with Computing, Engineering and Information Systems the next most common school (15, 12%). Aside from these numbers, there was a reasonable dispersion of students across the remaining seven schools, which may be of particular interest when analysing data from the SCBS – differing complaint styles may reflect the sorts of students attracted to certain courses, or perhaps even the individual schools' willingness to receive and handle complaints.

6.3 East-Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM)

After receiving an individual user code for the website (allowing them to return and complete at a later date if desired), respondents were then taken to the acculturation scale as part one of the survey. As outlined in Section 5.4.1, this section required respondents to indicate their agreement with 29 statements on a seven-point scale, developed by Barry (2001) to determine the individuals' acculturation style. Each item taps into one of Berry's (1980) acculturation styles: Assimilation (eight items), separation (seven), integration (five) and marginalisation (nine).

Table 26 summarises the average scores for each acculturation style across all respondents, and also highlights how many adopt each style. Almost half

of the respondents (46%) scored highest on the integration sub-scale, with a further 45 (37%) reporting highest scores on the separation sub-scale. The remaining acculturation styles (assimilation and marginalisation) were far less prevalent amongst the respondents, with 8% and 9% reporting these styles respectively. This divide is evident via the average scores displayed in the second column: whereas integration and separation averages are around the 4.00 mark (possible scores of 1.00 to 7.00), assimilation and marginalisation are closer to 3.00.

Acculturation Style	Mean Score (/7)	Standard Deviation	No. reported as preferred style	Percentage (%)
Assimilation	3.23	0.26	10	8
Separation	3.91	0.99	45	37
Integration	4.18	0.57	59	46
Marginalisation	3.09	0.36	11	9
Total			125	100

Table 26: Preferred Acculturation Styles

Table 27 analyses the items belonging to each individual sub-scale and is useful in terms of highlighting individual items that received notably high or low levels of agreement from respondents. Overall, the item scoring the highest level of agreement was number six from the separation sub-scale: “My closest friends are Asian” which scored an average of 5.85. This was significantly higher than the next high scoring item which scored 4.69 (item 11 from the integration sub-scale: “I have both English and Asian friends”).

These were also the two highest scoring items when Barry (2001) first tested the instrument. Unsurprisingly, the lowest scoring items both came from the marginalisation sub-scale: item 23 "Sometimes I feel that Asians and English people do not accept me" scored 2.63, whilst item 29 "I find that I do not feel comfortable when I am with other people" scored marginally higher at 2.66. The lowest scoring item reported by Barry (2001) was item 25 from the separation sub-scale "Asians should not date non-Asians" (1.69).

Sub-Scale	Item No.	Item Description	Average Score	Barry (2001) Average Score
Assimilation	1	Write better in English than native language	3.39	2.74
	5	Speak English at home	3.06	3.25
	9	Prefer to write poetry in English	3.54	2.81
	13	Get along better with English people	3.12	3.14
	17	English people understand me better	2.85	2.74
	21	Easier to communicate with English people	3.14	2.83
	24	More comfortable socialising with English	3.54	3.09
	27	Most friends at university are English	3.12	3.46
Separation	2	Listen to Asian music	3.93	2.87
	6	Closest friends are Asian	5.85	5.53
	10	Prefer Asian social gatherings	3.40	4.22
	14	Asians treat me as equal	3.85	4.09
	18	Prefer date with an Asian	3.49	4.44
	22	More relaxed around Asians	4.21	4.60
	25	Asians should date other Asians	2.66	1.69
Integration	3	Tell jokes in both languages	3.62	4.63
	7	Think in both languages	3.49	4.19
	11	Both English and Asian friends	4.69	5.55
	15	Feel valued by English and Asians	4.38	5.13
	19	Comfortable around English and Asians	4.62	4.88
Marginalisation	4	Difficult to socialise with anybody	2.94	2.13
	8	Neither English people or Asians like me	2.87	2.16
	12	No-one understands me	3.70	3.73
	16	Hard to communicate with people	3.48	4.07
	20	Hard to make friends	3.11	3.64
	23	Not accepted by English people or Asians	2.63	2.38
	26	Hard to trust English people or Asians	3.12	3.17
	28	Both English people and Asians don't understand me	3.25	3.26
	29	Not comfortable with other people	2.66	2.81

Table 27: EAAM Sub-Scale Scores by Item

These scores seem to fit with previous work done on international student interaction: Volet and Ang (1998) have highlighted that students tend not to integrate hugely with other national groups. University managers may be encouraged by the fact that the marginalisation items received the lowest levels of agreement – it would be logical to assume that those feeling marginalised from the university would be the most likely ones to consider withdrawing.

The final column in Table 27 reports the average scores when the instrument was first developed and utilised on a similar population (East-Asians, but instead studying in the US). Overall, it is interesting to note only minimal differences between the two samples' average scores – only two of the items had a score difference of greater than 1.00 (items 2 and 3, with differences of 1.06 and -1.01 respectively). Over half of the items (15) had a difference of <0.5 between the two populations, suggesting that any cultural or environmental differences experienced by the two samples did not greatly affect the EAAM scores.

6.3.1 Assessing Reliability and Validity of the EAAM

As previously discussed in Chapter Five, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was utilised to assess the internal reliability of the EAAM. The importance of this score is underlined by Churchill (1979, p. 68), who indicated that a low coefficient alpha indicates the sample of items performs poorly in "capturing the construct which motivated the measure". In addition, item-total correlations were calculated for each sub-scale and the EAAM overall – this is a useful tool in that it highlights which items do not share the scale's "common core" (Churchill, 1979, p. 68). The results of these measurements are illustrated in Table 28.

Sub-Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Average Item-Total Correlations
Assimilation	8	0.73	0.60
Separation	7	0.50	0.51
Integration	5	0.64	0.64
Marginalisation	9	0.78	0.60
Overall	29	0.73	0.59

Table 28: Cronbach's Alpha and Average Item-Total Correlations for EAAM and Sub-scales

The above table confirms the suitable reliability of the instrument for use in applied research. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the EAAM was 0.73, an acceptable level of reliability for psychometric instruments (Nunally, 1967) and also almost identical to the alpha score gained when the scale was originally developed and tested by Barry (2001). Similarly, the item-total correlations calculated were very similar and at an acceptable level (0.59 for the present study, 0.58 for Barry's original study).

In terms of validity, Jacoby (1978) commented that "the most necessary type of validity in scientific research is construct validity" (p. 92), which refers to whether the scale fits with theoretical thinking and is actually measuring the construct it was designed to (in this case, Berry's [1980] acculturation styles). In the context of the EAAM, this can be investigated by producing correlations between the four sub-scales and seeing if the results align with conceptual thinking on acculturation. From looking at Berry's (1980) taxonomy (Chapter Two), we can see that, in general, one would expect to see a negative

correlation exist between (1) assimilation and separation, and (2) integration and marginalisation. The results of the sub-scale correlations can be found in Table 29.

		Assimilation	Separation	Integration	Marginalisation
Assimilation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.076	.382(**)	.189(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.401	.000	.035
	N	125	125	125	125
Separation	Pearson Correlation	-.076	1	-.242(**)	.217(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.401		.007	.015
	N	125	125	125	125
Integration	Pearson Correlation	.382(**)	-.242(**)	1	-.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.007		.981
	N	125	125	125	125
Marginalisation	Pearson Correlation	.189(*)	.217(*)	-.002	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.015	.981	
	N	125	125	125	125

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 29: EAAM Sub-scale Correlations

The results displayed in Table 29 appear to provide construct validity for the EAAM. A weak negative correlation exists between assimilation and separation, and significant positive relationships are evident between integration and assimilation (.382) and marginalisation and separation (.217), mirroring the results presented by Barry (2001) when the scale was originally developed.

6.3.2 Analysis of EAAM by Demographic Variables

Despite not being integral to testing of the hypotheses, the decision was made to analyse the data alongside the demographic information submitted by respondents. This enables the researcher to understand to what extent key demographic factors impact upon individual acculturation style. In addition, such data may uncover particular findings that could be investigated further as part of the semi-structured interviews.

Firstly, Spearman's Rank Order correlation was used to test for associations between acculturation scores and both length of stay and age. The results of these correlations are summarised in Table 30:

	Assimilation	Separation	Integration	Marginalisation
Age	-.201*	.011	-.200*	-.089
Length of Stay	.024	.061	.054	-.095

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 30: Spearman's *rho* for Acculturation Styles against Age and Length of Stay

The above table suggests that there is very little association between either age or length of stay and the four acculturation styles. The only correlations of note are weak and negative in nature: age and assimilation (-.201) and age

and integration (.200), suggesting that as people get older they are less likely to adopt either of these acculturation styles.

It would have been expected to see stronger associations in Table 30 – for example one would expect to find a strong positive correlation between length of stay and integration, and a strong negative correlation between length of stay and marginalisation. Indeed, previous authors who have developed other acculturation scales (as discussed in Chapter Two) use this correlation as an assessment of their instruments' construct validity. The most likely explanation for these results is the homogenous nature of the population from which the respondents were drawn. Only four of the 125 respondents had been in the UK for five or more years, and 118 (94%) of respondents were aged 20-30. It may be expected that had the instrument been administered in a less homogenous population (such as permanent immigrants) that the apparent influence of length of stay would be significantly higher.

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to assess if scores on the EAAM were associated with the language chosen to complete the online survey (simplified Chinese or English) and also gender. The results of these tests are reported in Tables 31 and 32 respectively. Inspection of the two group means illustrates that those who completed the survey in English scored significantly higher on the integration sub-scale (4.55) than did those who chose Simplified Chinese (3.77). This finding is not surprising, as those

who chose to use English may have higher levels of confidence in their language ability, which in turn would increase their ability to interact with UK-based students. Respondents using English also scored a higher mean on the assimilation sub-scale, however this was not statistically significant ($p = .149$). The two groups did not differ significantly on either the separation or marginalisation sub-scales.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Assimilation			-1.45	123	.149
Simplified Chinese	3.09	1.02			
English	3.36	1.09			
Separation			-.77	123	.444
Simplified Chinese	3.85	0.85			
English	3.97	0.93			
Integration			-4.3	123	.000
Simplified Chinese	3.77	1.00			
English	4.55	1.02			
Marginalisation			-.48 ^a	107.81 ^a	.632
Simplified Chinese	3.04	1.31			
English	3.13	0.87			

^a The *t* and *df* were adjusted because variances were not equal.

Table 31: Independent Samples t-test for Acculturation Styles Against Language Chosen

The comparison of means in Table 32 illustrates that males score significantly higher on the separation sub-scale (4.10) than females (3.79). A potential explanation for this was uncovered through the semi-structured interviews: female East-Asian students appear more likely to engage in cross-cultural romantic relationships than males, something which would increase their

propensity to integrate into UK culture. No significant differences were found for gender on the assimilation, integration and marginalisation sub-scales.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Assimilation					
Male	3.22	1.15	-.06	123	.954
Female	3.23	1.00			
Separation					
Male	4.10	0.84	1.98	123	.050
Female	3.79	0.90			
Integration					
Male	4.19	1.05	.24	123	.808
Female	4.14	1.10			
Marginalisation					
Male	3.12	0.99	.29	123	.774
Female	3.06	1.18			

Table 32: Independent Samples t-test for Acculturation Styles Against Gender

One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were then conducted for the EAAM to compare acculturation styles across the remaining demographic variables: academic school, country of origin and religion. Although the population was not evenly distributed across these groups (for example, over half of the sample came from one school [Business], and 63% of respondents reported no religious beliefs) any significant differences could be further investigated in the second stage of data collection.

Table 33 displays sub-scale means against country of origin and shows that the mean assimilation score for Mainland China respondents was 2.97, significantly lower than respondents from Hong Kong (3.43), Malaysia (3.86), and Singapore (4.75).

Country of Origin	Assimilation			Separation		Integration		Marginalisation	
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Mainland China	62	2.97	0.97	3.88	0.94	3.99	1.08	3.03	1.22
Malaysia	22	3.86	1.06	3.97	0.93	4.85	0.98	3.16	0.84
Singapore	3	4.75	-0.35	4.57	0.81	5.00	0.57	3.28	0.55
Taiwan	19	3.10	1.08	3.56	0.77	4.02	1.04	2.74	1.00
Vietnam	4	3.25	0.46	3.97	1.07	4.90	0.70	3.67	0.63
Hong Kong	15	3.43	0.94	4.21	0.59	3.83	0.84	3.57	1.13
Total	125	3.22	1.06	3.91	0.89	4.16	1.08	3.08	1.11

Table 33: Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Country of Origin Against Acculturation Styles

Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests were conducted to examine these differences further, and Table 34 indicates that both the Mainland China and Taiwan groups differed significantly from the Singapore group ($p < .05$). Although the Singapore group was particularly small, it was not surprising to see this group show the greatest propensity to assimilate given that the nation has spent considerable time under British Colonial rule.

Origin	N	Subset for alpha = .05	
		1	2
Mainland China	62	2.9724	
Taiwan	19	3.1016	
Vietnam	4	3.2500	3.2500
Hong Kong	15	3.4280	3.4280
Malaysia	22	3.8550	3.8550
Singapore	2		4.7500
Sig.		.600	.079

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a Uses harmonic mean sample size = 6.446.

b The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Table 34: Post-hoc Tukey HSD test for Assimilation Sub-scale Against Country of Origin

Table 33 also shows that the mean integration sub-scale for respondents from Hong Kong was 3.83, significantly lower than Malaysia (4.85), Vietnam (4.90) and Singapore (5.00). Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests were again run to investigate this further (see Table 35), which show no significant differences across the different countries for the integration sub-scale. Given that integration is generally regarded as the healthiest form of acculturation (Ghaffarian, 2001) this is positive news for universities as it shows that all East-Asian nationalities do not differ in their propensity to integrate with UK culture.

Origin	N	Subset for alpha = .05
	1	1
Hong Kong	15	3.8267
Mainland China	62	3.9935
Taiwan	19	4.0211
Malaysia	22	4.8455
Vietnam	4	4.9000
Singapore	2	5.0000
Sig.		.312

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a Uses harmonic mean sample size = 6.446.

b The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Table 35: Post-hoc Tukey HSD test for Integration Sub-Scale Against Country of Origin

As mentioned previously, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were also conducted to consider if academic school and religion were significant in choice of acculturation styles. However, no significant differences were noted across both ANOVAs, suggesting that there is no difference in acculturation styles chosen by respondents across the different academic schools of the university or the religion of the respondents. However, these results may have been affected by the fact that respondents were spread unevenly across the academic schools, largely due to the popularity of particular courses.

6.4 Student Complaint Behaviours Survey (SCBS)

Upon completion of the EAAM, respondents were then directed to the next part of the survey, the SCBS. As discussed in Chapter Five, this instrument was designed to understand respondent's likely responses in a series of dissatisfactory university scenarios. Respondents were provided with four vignettes (1 general, 3 focused on specific issues – assessment feedback, course organisation and the university library) and asked to indicate their likelihood of responding in a number of ways. Participants responded to 10 items for each vignette (totalling 40 items), which all represented one of the four complaint styles highlighted in Section 3.9.1: Public (12 items), private (eight), third party (eight) and non-behavioural (12). Table 36 illustrates the average scores (possible scores 1.00 – 6.00) for each complaint style mentioned above across each of the four vignettes provided.

	Public	Private	Third Party	Non-Behavioural
General	4.09	4.92	3.81	2.83
Vignette 1 (Assessment Feedback)	4.44	4.69	3.02	2.64
Vignette 2 (Course Organisation)	4.63	4.73	3.35	2.71
Vignette 3 (Library Penalty)	4.75	4.24	3.85	2.37
Overall	4.48	4.46	3.50	2.64

Table 36: Complaint Style Average Scores Across Vignettes

In line with previous research on CCB, the table shows that in general respondents are more likely to use private complaint styles, and are least likely to engage in any of the non-behavioural responses. However, it is interesting to note that in two of the three specific scenarios, respondents reported they were most likely to engage in public behaviours, which involved communicating directly with a member of staff. This suggests a more proactive approach to seeking redress than is often assumed of people from collectivist cultures. In all cases, third party responses were also not seen as a feasible response style: this was particularly surprising in vignette 1, where problems concerning assessment and feedback could possibly be discussed with other parties (such as the Student Union).

It was expected that due to the academic consequences of vignette 1, this would receive the highest scores in public complaints. However, the data shows that both the second and third vignettes scored higher on public behaviours (4.64 and 4.73 respectively). Although these two vignettes may not have the largest impact on the students' final degree classification, there are other factors here that may have mediated their responses (such as respect for authority figures and immediate financial penalties) and these could be explored further within the semi-structured interviews. Vignette 3 was designed to incorporate an immediate financial implication for respondents, and it is interesting to note that respondents were most likely to utilise third party complaint styles in this situation. This result may also be

explained by the nature of the vignette, which implied that the student was being treated unfairly. This perceived injustice (Blodgett and Tax, 1993) may cause the student to complain publicly as a means of proving their innocence.

Building on these results, Table 37 illustrates average scores for each individual item across the vignettes to provide a clearer idea of how students are likely to react to dissatisfactory experiences.

Item	General	Vignette 1 (Assessment Feedback)	Vignette 2 (Course Organisation)	Vignette 3 (Library Penalty)	Overall
Speak to a member of academic staff (lecturers or tutors)	4.16	5.12	5.03	4.00	4.58
Speak to a member of non-academic staff (office or support staff)	3.75	3.47	3.89	5.04	4.04
Speak to a member of student services	4.14	3.41	3.66	4.42	3.91
Speak to fellow students	4.88	4.56	4.95	4.55	4.74
Speak to family/other close friends	4.94	4.80	4.47	3.90	4.53
Consider leaving the university	2.18	2.19	2.22	1.82	2.10
Speak to a third party (e.g. Students' Union)	3.51	2.62	3.04	3.25	3.11
Send email to relevant staff member (academic or non-academic)	4.44	4.76	4.90	5.25	4.84
Hold more negative attitude towards the university	3.55	3.66	3.69	3.64	3.64
Do nothing	2.80	2.05	2.24	1.59	2.17

Table 37: Individual Response Items Across Vignettes

Overall, the item “send email to relevant staff member (academic or non-academic)” was the most likely response reported by students (4.84), closely followed by “speak to fellow students” (4.74). The results vindicate the decision to incorporate a separate item into the SCBS concerning email, as recent research has shown that this is an increasingly relevant channel for dissatisfied customers (Park, 2005). Given that all students have access to an email account, the availability of staff email addresses and a high level of computer literacy amongst the international student body this result is perhaps not surprising. The decision to separate word of mouth style responses into two categories is also vindicated: respondents appear slightly more likely to discuss these issues with fellow students than other friends and family who perhaps cannot fully empathise with the situation.

The least likely responses across all vignettes were “consider leaving the university” (2.10) and “do nothing” (2.17), and these were the lowest average scores by a significant margin. These results have positive implications for university managers – they show that even in the case of particularly dissatisfying experiences, students see withdrawing from the university as a last resort. In addition, the low score for “do nothing” implies a pro-active approach to complaining that could help rectify students’ problems and ensure the same mistakes are not replicated with future students.

Analysis of individual vignettes also shows a high propensity to complain directly to the relevant member of staff. In vignettes 1 and 2, “speak to a

member of academic staff (lecturers or tutors)” was the highest scoring response (5.12 and 5.03) and in vignette 3 “send email to relevant staff member (academic or non-academic)” scored highest with 5.25. At this point it feels relevant to reiterate the reflections of Hernandez and Fugate, who utilised a similar vignette approach in their study of CCB and pointed out that:

Any time behavioural intentions are used as a proxy for behaviour, there is an opportunity for misrepresentation of actual market phenomenon

(Hernandez and Fugate, 2004, p. 161)

In this context, it may well be that respondents are perhaps over-estimating their public responses when in reality they may utilise more private or non-behavioural responses. This may be done in order to portray a more confident and independent individual who is not afraid to stand up for themselves in times of conflict, an idea discussed further in Chapter Eight.

It is also interesting to note that the third party responses “speak to a member of student services” and “speak to a third party (e.g. Students' Union)”, scored highest in vignette 3 concerning the library. From this, it appears that students are prepared to make a greater effort to gain redress when there is a threat of financial penalty, unsurprising given the well-publicised financial plight of students.

6.4.1 Assessing Reliability and Validity of the SCBS

Given the vignette questioning approach utilised, the calculation of a Cronbach Alpha score for the SCBS was not deemed to be an appropriate measure of the instrument's reliability. Theoretically, it is possible to split the SCBS into four 'sub-scales' as done with the EAAM (public, private, third party and non-behavioural) and calculate alphas using the relevant items. However, each vignette in the SCBS was designed to incorporate different circumstances, and as such was likely to generate differing results between scenarios (for example, complaining to either academic or non-academic staff are both considered as public complaint styles, however as some scenarios are specific to academic and non-academic issues, it is likely that the answers provided will differ significantly).

It is interesting to note that previous CCB research that has used a similar vignette format has failed to address the issue of instrument reliability, possibly because of the above complexity (for example Hernandez and Fugate, 2004). This may also reflect the idea that these instruments were developed with the somewhat pragmatic objective of answering specific research questions rather than developing an empirically tested scale for use in future research projects.

A brief investigation of other potential reliability measures failed to find a suitable alternative. The test-retest method of measuring reliability (Carmines and Zeller, 1979) involves re-administering the instrument with the same population at a later date but was not deemed appropriate: a severe limitation of this approach is that respondents can act on their memory to replicate answers, which may provide an artificially high level of reliability. It was felt that given the more detailed and involving nature of the vignettes, this problem may be magnified. The split-halves reliability measure would not eliminate the problems that have already been identified with the Cronbach Alpha, and the alternative forms method requires two distinctive tests that measure the same thing, which would be particularly difficult to implement given the specific nature of the vignettes.

In terms of assessing the construct validity of the SCBS, a similar approach that was adopted with the EAAM was used – a simple correlation between the overall scores for each complaint styles was conducted and can be seen in Table 38. The table shows the following correlations which appear to provide construct validity for the SCBS:

- Negative correlation between public and non-behavioural styles, which can be considered as the two 'extremes' of complaint styles in terms of effort and involvement (-.299);

- Positive correlation between public and third party styles, both of which require a concerted effort from the dissatisfied individual (.488);
- Positive correlation between private and non-behavioural styles, both of which require minimal effort (-.255).

		Overall Public	Overall Private	Overall Third Party	Overall Non-Behavioural
Overall Public	Pearson Correlation	1	.204(*)	.488(**)	-.299(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.022	.000	.001
	N	126	126	126	126
Overall Private	Pearson Correlation	.204(*)	1	.237(**)	.255(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022		.008	.004
	N	126	126	126	126
Overall Third Party	Pearson Correlation	.488(**)	.237(**)	1	.214(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.008		.016
	N	126	126	126	126
Overall Non-Behavioural	Pearson Correlation	-.299(**)	.255(**)	.214(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.004	.016	
	N	126	126	126	126

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 38: SCBS Complaint Style Correlations

6.4.2 Analysis of SCBS by Demographic Variables

As with the EAAM, the next section will investigate if any associations exist between the scores on the SCBS for each complaint style and the demographic data captured at the end of the survey. This will be of particular interest as studies of complaint behaviour in the education sector are particularly rare, and a review of the literature failed to uncover any empirical

work designed to understand which students are more likely to engage in the various complaint behaviours.

Table 39 shows the Spearman's rank order correlations between the four complaint styles and age and length of stay. Much as with the same correlation involving the EAAM, the results suggests little association between the two variables. The only notable correlation was weak and negative in nature between age and private (-.186), suggesting that the older the respondent, the less likely they are to engage in word of mouth in light of a dissatisfactory incident: it may be that mature students do not socialise regularly with younger students and therefore do not have the opportunity to discuss course issues with fellow students.

	Public	Private	Third Party	Non-Behavioural
Age	-.045	-.186*	-.100	-.050
Length of Stay	-.002	-.035	-.053	.143

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 39: Spearman's *rho* for Complaint Styles against Age and Length of Stay

Independent samples t-tests were undertaken to discover if scores on the SCBS were correlated to either the choice of language used to complete the survey or gender, and the results from these tests can be found in Tables 40 and 41 respectively. A review of group means in Table 40 suggests that no

significant differences exist across the different complaint styles depending on choice of language, although those who completed in Simplified Chinese were more likely to engage in non-behavioural responses (2.78) than those who chose English (2.49). It was surprising not to uncover more significant differences between the two groups: as communication is an important element of complaining, it may have transpired that those using English may show a higher propensity to publicly complain. However, it may instead be that although no differences were evident, those with a higher level of English language ability may be more successful when they do submit a complaint.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	p
Public					
Simplified Chinese	4.42	0.78	-.75	123	.455
English	4.53	0.87			
Private					
Simplified Chinese	4.73	1.18	.68	123	.496
English	4.59	1.07			
Third Party					
Simplified Chinese	3.53	1.19	.20	123	.845
English	3.49	1.14			
Non-Behavioural					
Simplified Chinese	2.78	0.95	1.89	123	.062
English	2.49	0.81			

Table 40: Independent Samples t-test for Complaint Styles Against Language Chosen

Previous research has not uncovered notable variances in complaint styles across genders, and a review of Table 41 shows no significant differences between males and females across the four complaint styles. It was noted

that females were slightly more likely to engage in private complaint behaviours (4.79) than their male counterparts (4.45), and females were also slightly more likely to engage in both public and third party complaining, however none of these differences were statistically significant.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	p
Public					
Male	4.43	0.81	-.52	123	.601
Female	4.51	0.84			
Private					
Male	4.45	1.21	-1.65	123	.102
Female	4.79	1.05			
Third Party					
Male	3.43	1.15	-.56	123	.580
Female	3.55	1.17			
Non-Behavioural					
Male	2.67	0.99	.32	123	.748
Female	2.62	0.82			

Table 41: Independent Samples t-test for Complaint Styles Against Gender

One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were run to investigate if scores on the SCBS were connected to country of origin, academic school or religion. Table 42 compares the means of the different nationalities of respondents across the four complaint styles, and demonstrates that respondents from Taiwan and Hong Kong scored significantly higher on the non-behavioural items (3.10 and 3.03 respectively) than respondents from Mainland China (2.51) and Malaysia (2.49). To investigate this further, a post-hoc Tukey HSD test was conducted, the results of which can be found in

Table 43. The results of this test show that significant differences exist between Hong Kong and Taiwan (with the highest scores) and Singapore (with the lowest score). However given the low number of respondents from Singapore this finding is of limited practical value.

Country of Origin	Public			Private		Third Party		Non-Behavioural	
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Mainland China	62	4.60	0.74	4.41	1.21	3.66	1.06	2.51	0.81
Malaysia	22	4.57	0.97	4.81	0.94	3.44	1.43	2.49	0.96
Singapore	3	4.82	0.26	5.88	0.18	2.38	1.94	1.61	0.74
Taiwan	19	4.21	0.89	5.11	0.82	3.29	1.11	3.10	1.04
Vietnam	4	4.19	0.52	4.04	1.58	3.38	0.80	2.10	0.80
Hong Kong	15	4.19	0.91	4.86	1.02	3.41	1.25	3.03	0.64
Total	125	4.48	0.83	4.66	1.12	3.51	1.16	2.64	0.89

Table 42: Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Country of Origin against Acculturation Styles

Origin	N	Subset for alpha = .05	
		1	2
Singapore	2	1.6050	
Vietnam	4	2.0950	2.0950
Malaysia	22	2.4905	2.4905
Mainland China	62	2.5105	2.5105
Hong Kong	15		3.0333
Taiwan	19		3.1032
Sig.		.410	.289

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a Uses harmonic mean sample size = 6.446.

b The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Table 43: Post-hoc Tukey HSD test for Non-Behavioural Complaint Style Against Country of Origin

Although this finding needs verifying on a larger scale, Singapore's colonial history and resulting links with UK culture would theoretically make their residents more like to publicly complain and therefore not engage in non-behavioural complaining. Using a similar argument, it was surprising to note that respondents from Hong Kong were one of the groups most likely to use non-behavioural complaint styles: given their very recent links to the British Empire, it may have been expected that this would instead increase their propensity to publicly complain.

One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were also conducted for both academic school and religion, however no significant differences were found across any of the complaint styles included in the SCBS. The lack of any significant differences across academic schools was somewhat surprising: it may have been expected that Business students may have a heightened awareness of consumer affairs and as such show a greater propensity to complain. Although this needs investigating on a more evenly spread population, this equality is potentially good news for universities as it indicates that no particular subject group of students are more likely to vent their dissatisfaction than another.

6.5 Bringing together data from the EAAM and SCBS

Once each individual instrument had been analysed both descriptively and in relation to the demographic data available, the next task was to bring the two sets of data together with a view to supporting or rejecting the hypotheses summarised in Figure 28 below.

To revisit the rationale behind the hypotheses briefly, it was predicted that, due to their increased interaction with UK culture, those who adopted either an assimilation or integration acculturation style would be more likely to adopt more public complaint behaviours. This formed Hypotheses 1 and 2. It was also predicted that, due to their reduced contact with UK culture, those who adopted either a separation or marginalisation acculturation style would be more likely to adopt more private complaint behaviours. This formed Hypotheses 3 and 4 (Figure 28). It was felt that, although there was potential for a further number of hypotheses to be tested (for example, consideration of third-party and non-behavioural complaint styles), the four hypotheses developed would be sufficient to enable the researcher to detect if any significant link exists between acculturation styles and complaint behaviours.

- **Hypothesis 1:** An association exists between the 'Assimilation' acculturation style and 'Public' complaint behaviours.
Null Hypothesis 1: No association exists between the 'Assimilation' acculturation style and 'Public' complaint behaviours.
- **Hypothesis 2:** An association exists between the 'Integration' acculturation style and 'Public' complaint behaviours.
Null Hypothesis 2: No association exists between the 'Integration' acculturation style and 'Public' complaint behaviours.
- **Hypothesis 3:** An association exists between the 'Separation' acculturation style and 'Private' complaint behaviours.
Null Hypothesis 3: No association exists between the 'Separation' acculturation style and 'Private' complaint behaviours.
- **Hypothesis 4:** An association exists between the 'Marginalisation' acculturation style and 'Private' complaint behaviours.
Null hypothesis 4: No association exists between the 'Marginalisation' acculturation style and 'Private' complaint behaviours.

Figure 28: Online Survey Hypotheses

The results of the correlation between the EAAM Sub-scale scores and overall complaint behaviours scores (from all vignettes) are shown in Table 44 below. Only a weak positive correlation was observed between assimilation and public complaints (.150), however a statistically significant positive correlation exists between integration and public complaints (.318 – significant at 0.01 level). Elsewhere, it appears that the EAAM sub-scales for separation and marginalisation are not associated with private complaint styles, with correlations of .083 and -.031 respectively.

It was also noted that both the separation and marginalisation acculturation styles were negatively correlated with public complaint styles, a logical finding given their lack of immersion with UK culture. Marginalisation was found to be negatively correlated with public, private and non-behavioural complaint styles (-.79, -.031 and -.065 respectively),

but a very weak positive correlation was noted with third party (.034), suggesting that this is the preferred complaint style for those who are marginalised from both their native and the host culture. This finding is logical to some extent, as people who are marginalised may lack the friendship networks to even vent their dissatisfaction privately. Indeed, it could be argued that their only option is to approach a stranger in the role of a third party for advice after a dissatisfactory incident.

		Overall Public	Overall Private	Overall Third-Party	Overall Non-Behavioural
Assimilation	Pearson Correlation	.150	.111	.076	-.098
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.096	.218	.398	.279
	N	125	125	125	125
Separation	Pearson Correlation	-.139	.083	-.030	.236(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	.355	.741	.008
	N	125	125	125	125
Integration	Pearson Correlation	.318(**)	-.008	.127	-.195(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.929	.157	.029
	N	125	125	125	125
Marginalisation	Pearson Correlation	-.079	-.031	.034	-.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.382	.734	.704	.471
	N	125	125	125	125

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 44: EAAM-SCBS Pearson Correlations

Other notable correlations observed from Table 44 were concerned with the non-behavioural complaint style – these were positively correlated with separation (.236 - significant at 0.01 level) and negatively correlated with integration (-.195 - significant at 0.05 level). This fits in with conceptual thinking on acculturation – those who are integrated are more likely to engage in public complaint styles (as demonstrated above) meaning the likelihood of them taking no action decreases. Elsewhere, the correlation

illustrated that third party behaviours were most likely to be utilised by those with an integration acculturation style, which is a logical finding given that those with a greater knowledge of UK culture will be best educated on which third parties can aid them should they become dissatisfied.

From the above correlations, it would appear that Hypotheses 1, 3 and 4 cannot be supported. Of the hypotheses outlined in Figure 28, only Hypothesis 2 (an association exists between the 'Integration' acculturation style and 'Public' complaint behaviours) can be partially supported. Although this correlation was relatively weak in nature (.318), it does suggest that those who are integrated are more likely to engage in public complaint behaviours, in this case approaching a lecturer or non-academic member of staff or alternatively sending an email. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, this association fits with logical thinking as an integrated individual will typically have higher self-confidence and potentially be more comfortable with the English language owing to regular practice with UK students. Assimilated individuals will also most likely have a heightened confidence in the English language, and therefore it was surprising that only a very weak correlation with public complaining was found (.150). This will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

6.6 Summary of Findings and Implications for Semi-Structured Interviews

From the analysis presented in Section 6.5, only limited associations exist between acculturation styles and complaint behaviours. Only Hypothesis 2 was partially supported, which suggested that an association existed between integration and public complaint behaviours. Although not a core aim of the semi-structured interviews, it would be interesting to note if respondents' experiences of their time in the UK reflect the online survey findings: for example, the majority of respondents reported a pro-active approach to public complaining, and the interviews offer an opportunity to uncover if such behaviours have been adopted in real-life complaint situations.

The EAAM revealed that the most common acculturation styles adopted were integration (46%) and separation (37%). Whilst the former is good news for universities desiring a truly international campus, it will be interesting to discover why so many separate themselves from UK culture. For example, this may be largely down to communication problems or an unwillingness to integrate on behalf of UK students. The item on the EAAM that received the highest mean score was concerning having Asian friends (5.85), and such co-national friendship networks are certainly reflective of the separation acculturation style. Those who completed the online survey in English scored higher on the assimilation and integration sub-scales, testament to the importance of language ability and usage in

acculturation. It will be interesting to further investigate respondents' usage of English (particularly away from the classroom), as this will be largely determined by their relationships with UK students.

Results from the SCBS show a very pro-active approach to complaining publicly across all scenarios (average of 4.48 out of 6). However as previously discussed the hypothetical nature of the SCBS may have artificially inflated this figure: the interviews offer an ideal opportunity to investigate this further by probing into their genuine complaint experiences to see how they have previously responded to dissatisfaction. It was unsurprising to see respondents indicate a high propensity to use email as a channel for voicing their complaints, as it removes the potential awkwardness of a face-to-face situation. The interviews can provide further insights on this issue by considering if particular complaint channels are more appropriate in certain situations (e.g. serious complaints may be formalised by utilising written rather than oral communication).

A more surprising finding was the fact that language didn't appear to be a significant factor in how students voice their dissatisfaction. However, it may be that using the language they completed the survey in is not a suitable proxy for respondents' actual language ability and usage. The interviews can investigate this further by probing around language issues and other potential barriers to complaining that East-Asian students may encounter.

On a methodological side note, Chapter Five discussed the development of the SCBS and in particular the decision to include the “Don’t know” option at the end of the scale as opposed to in the centre. This was done as Dillman (2000) had suggested that placing such a neutral options at the end of a scale encourages respondents to provide a directional response, which was deemed to be appropriate given the hypothetical nature of the scenarios. Conversely, the EAAM included a neutral point in the centre of the scale, and it was felt that a comparison of the two may to some extent add to the debate on the optimum position of neutral response points.

	<i>n</i>	No. of Items	Total no. of Items Completed (<i>n</i> x No. of Items)	No. of usages of 'Neutral' Items	Percentage
EAAM	125	29	3,625	637	17.6%
SCBS	125	40	5,000	212	4.2%

Table 45: Comparison of the use of neutral response options across EAAM and SCBS instruments

Table 45 provides a comparison of the use of neutral options on both the EAAM and SCBS, and shows that the use of neutral responses was notably higher in the EAAM (17.6%) than the SCBS (4.2%). The low number of respondents utilising the neutral option on the SCBS suggests that it may be superfluous: however it could be argued that forcing respondents into giving a directional answer may discourage them from completing the survey. Ideally, if this research was replicated on a larger scale, the use of the neutral point could be compared within one instrument (i.e. some respondents have a central neutral point, some

towards the end). This would provide a stronger indication on whether the position of the neutral point is a significant issue.

6.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has employed suitable quantitative analytical tools to present the data collected through the online survey. Following a brief review of respondent demographics, descriptive statistics on both the EAAM and the SCBS were presented, alongside relevant bivariate statistical tests that searched for associations with various demographic variables. Evidence of instrument reliability and validity were also provided, a crucial element of any quantitative study (Jacoby, 1978). The latter stages of the chapter brought together data from the two instruments to test the hypotheses, with only Hypothesis 2 being partially supported by the resultant correlations. The chapter closed with a review of the key findings and the implications of these for stage two of data collection.

Chapter Seven: Data Analysis – Semi-Structured Interviews

7.1 Overview of Chapter

Following on from the online survey data analysis in Chapter Six, the subsequent discussion will present the data collected through the semi-structured interviews. Whereas the Online Survey was developed to investigate if a relationship exists between acculturation styles and complaint behaviours (Research Question 1), the interviews were conducted to address three additional research questions developed throughout the literature review process, which were more appropriately addressed through a more qualitative line of enquiry (highlighted in Figure 29).

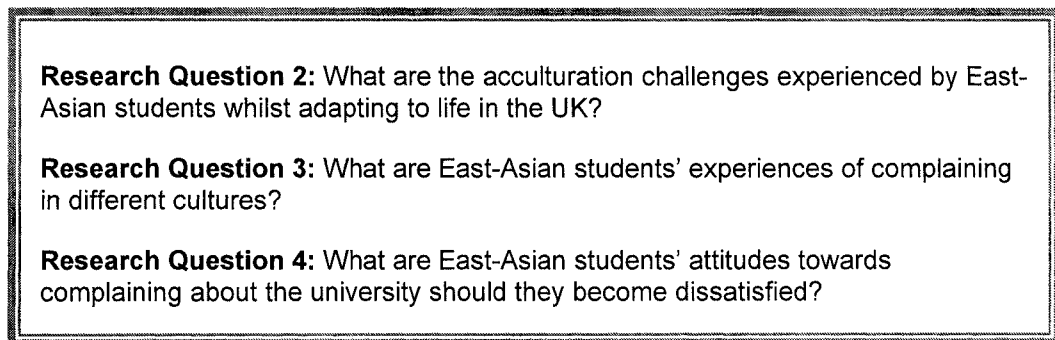


Figure 29: Interview Research Questions

As discussed in Chapter Five, the interview schedule was designed around three key themes (acculturation, consumer complaint behaviour across cultures and student complaint behaviour) to ensure that all research questions were thoroughly addressed. The chapter will therefore

be divided between these three themes and where appropriate consider links with the findings from the Online Survey.

7.2 Respondent Breakdown and Data Analysis Methods

A brief demographic breakdown of respondents is provided in Table 46.

Although the primary aim of the sampling process was to ensure a range of acculturation styles were captured, it is also pleasing to note a reasonable split between both genders (four males and six females) and undergraduate and postgraduate students (six and four respectively).

Reflecting the composition of the East-Asian student body at Northumbria, half of the respondents were from Mainland China, although Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan were also represented.

Respondent	Gender	Nationality	Course (undergraduate or postgraduate)	Time in UK (at time of interview)
A	Male	Mainland China	Sports (UG)	7-9 months
B	Female	Hong Kong	Business (UG)	4-6 months
C	Female	Mainland China	Engineering (UG)	7-9 months
D	Male	Malaysia	Engineering (UG)	7-9 months
E	Male	Malaysia	Quantity Surveying (UG)	1-2 years
F	Male	Mainland China	Business (PG)	7-9 months
G	Female	Taiwan	E-Knowledge Management (PG)	2-3 years
H	Female	Mainland China	Education (PG)	7-9 months
I	Female	Mainland China	I.T. (PG)	2-3 years
J	Female	Malaysia	Business (UG)	1-2 years

Table 46: Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

Overall, the respondents recruited also represented the four acculturation styles that were tapped in the EAAM. Given that the majority (over 80%) of respondents were ascribed to either the integration or separation style

such respondents were naturally easier to recruit due to their larger numbers, however students belonging to the remaining acculturation styles were also successfully recruited. Using the scores from the EAAM the respondents were categorised as representing assimilation (respondents F and J), integration (A, E and I), separation (D, G and H) and marginalisation (B and C).

As discussed in Section 5.5.2, the interview data was analysed using a process of data reduction and analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Once the data was placed into a matrix (see Appendix J), the researcher looked for similarities between respondents' responses and used these to highlight pertinent issues for discussion. The practice of looking for themes across respondents is particularly suited to this pragmatic study as it can lead to the development of recommendations for universities with large numbers of international students.

All quotations used in this analysis are taken verbatim from the interview transcriptions, and have not been amended for any grammatical errors.

7.3 Theme One: Acculturation

After a short ice-breaker which focused on the students' choice of course and university, the first theme explored was the respondents' adaptation to life and study in the UK. In order to understand the initial fears and

challenges anticipated by respondents, the initial discussion focused on the views of respondents prior to their physical move to the UK. East-Asian students may find themselves placed under significant pressure from their parents to move into HE and focus on academic qualifications. Introduced in 1979, China's 'One Child Policy' has reportedly prevented a further 400 million births and consequently increased the number of single-child families. This may in turn result in single children being placed under greater pressure to gain a graduate qualification: indeed, two respondents reported genuine parental pressure, be it in terms of the broader decision of whether to attend university or the more detailed issues of which countries and courses to apply for. Should a student be pushed into university life abroad their experiences of the alternative culture may differ markedly, as whether the sojourn is voluntary or enforced has been shown to be pivotal in the acculturation process. One respondent commented that he was forced to study in the UK even though his parents have a deep-rooted dislike for Western countries: they appeared keen for their son to exploit the UK education system without him being influenced by other cultures:

They don't like western country but they will still send their children to western countries for education but they will not encourage them to stay there, to work. Like my sisters, both of them are graduating in Australia and then they'll go back straight away after they graduate

(Respondent E)

Despite having little or no exposure to alternative cultures prior to travelling to the UK, most respondents appeared to recall positive emotions towards studying abroad prior to enrolment. However, this apparent excitement and fascination with the prospect of studying in the UK was often accompanied by an understandable element of caution:

Yes because it is the first time I go abroad. I know not what I will meet here.... anyone would be a little bit scared

(Respondent F)

With such high levels of uncertainty surrounding their move to the UK, it is perhaps unsurprising that many seek advice from students from the same country who have already studied at the university. These individuals are referred to as 'seniors' and are often the first source of guidance for issues from study to setting up bank accounts. Aside from seniors, respondents reported contacting other friends and family members who were based in the UK to provide similar guidance. This search for friendly or familiar faces may be done to provide comfort in the early stages of a sojourn; however it may transpire that seeking the friendship of fellow nationals in the short-term may limit their desire to integrate with the host culture throughout their stay.

The focus of respondents' pre-move concerns appears to be more around the functional aspects of surviving in UK society rather than the potential cultural differences they may encounter. For example, Interviewee H was too pre-occupied with visa arrangements to really consider what life would

be like in the UK. Other functional issues raised by respondents included finding suitable accommodation and setting up bank accounts.

A common theme amongst respondents was the challenge of communicating with others in English, both written and orally. In most Asian schools English is a key element of the curriculum, and in Taiwan most schools use English in class everyday. International students coming to Northumbria are required to obtain a minimum score of 6.5 on the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and are also offered an additional language support course which runs before the start of the academic year. Despite this, respondents appeared to lack confidence and see their sojourn as an opportunity to improve their language ability with a view to “decrease the misunderstanding” (Respondent G).

Despite showing an overall awareness of the potential problems they may encounter whilst studying abroad, respondents appeared keen to focus instead on the positive elements of living in a ‘new’ culture and not dwell on any potential challenges they may face. It may be that such a positive outlook is a result of advice from others who have already experienced life in the UK, and also the pre-arrival information that is supplied by the university as part of the application process:

I think I prepared very well before I come to the UK. It's not scared. I know there are lots of difficulties but I have to face it. It's a challenge and you can learn a lot doing this experience

(Respondent A)

Upon arrival in the UK the main point of comparison between home and host cultures appears to be approaches to recreation and socialising. Whilst East-Asian students are comfortable sitting in cafés with friends until the early hours of the morning, British students typically consume large amounts of alcohol in the many bars and nightclubs in Newcastle. Although efforts have been made by the Student Union to make the “Freshers” Week activities (events organised at the start of the academic year for newly enrolled students) less oriented around alcohol consumption, becoming familiar with the many bars and nightclubs in Newcastle remains a traditional element of such activities. This fascination with alcohol shown by UK students is something which may alienate international students in the early weeks of their sojourn:

Yeah, always drink beer... everywhere I go there is beer, beer and beer. I'm not fond of drinking beers

(Respondent D)

This led respondents to suggest that UK students have a more relaxed attitude towards study and are more liberal in terms of their behaviour in public. In contrast, Asian students were considered more conservative and conscientious in their studies, which one respondent suggested may be down to the inflated fees paid to study in the UK (considered further in Section 7.5.1). Respondents also suggested that there were limited places for them to spend their leisure time, an issue that universities with large East-Asian student populations should seek to address.

More specifically, respondents were also asked to discuss their perceptions of education in the UK in comparison with their home country. Alongside the US and to a lesser extent Australia, the UK HE sector has a strong reputation amongst the international student body, something which may explain why international students are prepared to pay higher fees for what they view as the privilege of studying in a UK university.

Respondents commented that UK tutors are more knowledgeable about their subject and focus on the academic theory that underpins their subjects, which tutors at home sometimes fail to do.

In terms of teaching styles, the didactic approach experienced in their home countries was lamented by some respondents as being overly-simplistic. Some believe that such an approach merely teaches them how to pass exams, and that they do not learn the transferable skills they need now they are in the UK:

The college in Malaysia, there mostly is spoon-feeding – you know? Just give you everything. They seldom ask you to dig research about something like here you need to do assignments and coursework that you need to find extra information... the lecture teachers pass on the notes and they tell you what will be coming out in the exams... even if I memorised a whole paragraph exactly the same then write it down, then I can get the full marks for that part

(Respondent E)

Linked to the above, the emphasis on independent study in the UK leaves students with a significant amount of non-contact time which they are responsible for managing correctly. Respondents had previously become

accustomed to spending in excess of 30 hours a week in classes that were almost entirely tutor-led. In the UK this contact time is significantly lower and the classes more interactive in nature. Instead of being guided by the tutor at every juncture, students now have to become independent learners at the same time as becoming independent people. Indeed, the amount of non-contact time experienced in the UK may exacerbate the feelings of boredom that have been previously discussed.

7.3.1 Integration into UK culture

The most important thing to do for me was fit in. If I am going to be here for two or three years there is no point doing it unhappily. If that means I have to observe people and see how they behave and maybe change a bit that's no problem. Its not like I am betraying my culture, just adapting to the environment

(Respondent J)

East-Asian students display a fascination with UK culture, particularly in the early stages of their sojourn. They have images of developing a multi-cultural network of friends, spending their time with fellow nationals, British students and even students from other nations. In some cases, cross-cultural contact is one of the key reasons for studying abroad as opposed to their home country: having such international experience may prove pivotal in securing future employment.

Consequently, respondents seem willing to accept the idea that they need to adapt: the level of cultural difference between the UK and their home

culture demands it. The temporary nature of their stay perhaps makes such changes appear less intimidating, as there is always the reassurance of returning home to a previous, more familiar way of life upon graduation. Although many show a willingness to integrate, there is no desire shown to abandon their original cultural values and assimilate, even amongst those respondents who wish to stay in the UK for a longer period. If anything, an educational sojourn may heighten their identification with their home culture:

When I come here I know much I love my country. Before that you always criticise your country, when you come here you find I am very lucky I come from China

(Respondent H)

A common means of meeting people from the UK is through joining university-led or other local organisations set up to encourage interaction amongst an increasingly diverse student population. The GLOBO Society was set up to provide an informal network between students of different nationalities, and regular meetings are held on campus where students can make friends and improve their language skills. Similarly, the Christian Fellowship encourages interaction with permanent UK residents who can provide international students with a more representative picture of UK life than merely the student population. In addition, many individual schools within the university organise further societies to cater for students of a particular subject.

Respondents who belong to either of the above groups appear to have made a conscious decision to integrate: they were seen as an ideal means of improving their English speaking ability or making new friends. Although respondents talk very positively of their experiences within these groups, it was mentioned that they provide contact with permanent residents but not necessarily UK students which would be more valued. This reflects a wider dissatisfaction with cross-cultural student relationships that will be discussed in Section 7.3.4.

A common issue that arose throughout many interviews was the consumption of alcohol in bars and clubs in Newcastle. Whilst some respondents deemed this as a barrier to communication with local students, others saw alcohol as a means of bridging this gap:

Another thing is maybe drinking. In China, I'm non-alco people. But here, sometimes when you go outside, especially in pub, you need to drink something to make yourself more exciting and maybe dancing later

(Respondent C)

Respondent C appeared to be very confident in building relationships with other students. Although she may have adopted behaviours she was initially uncomfortable with, she felt this was rewarded by acceptance from other students. Such friendships have meant she is able to use English more often than her first language of Mandarin, and that local students offer her advice in subjects she does not understand. This is a potentially useful issue for educational managers: whilst much discourse on

international students focuses on their individual choice of whether to integrate with local students, it may be that this decision is largely dictated by whether local students choose to accept international students into their friendship networks.

Romantic relationships between an East-Asian student and a UK resident may also increase their propensity to engage in more 'Western' behaviours. Respondent G noted how a number of close female friends "have begun to change to a bit, more adapt" since they started relationships with local male students. Such changes are largely dictated by the boyfriend and may include switching food preferences or increased alcohol consumption.

A recurring theme throughout the interviews is the use of the English language, which is a crucial factor in how well East-Asian students can interact with other cultures. The ability to communicate with other nationalities and understand academic requirements appears to be one of the largest issues facing international students at the beginning of their sojourn, and is often a motivating factor in their decision to join various organisations. A key objective throughout the sojourn is to improve the quality of their spoken English, however most East-Asian students have only limited opportunities to communicate with UK students, particularly outside of class. This lack of opportunity has led respondents to use English only when absolutely necessary (be it in class or when talking to other nationalities: Respondent B).

Should East-Asian students lack the regular interaction required to improve their English language ability this may manifest itself in decreased participation in the classroom. This may in turn lead to UK-based students dominating classroom discussion, and is perhaps incorrectly attributed to East-Asian students struggling with more Western approaches to teaching. In reality, international students may be fully knowledgeable on the issues being discussed but language problems are limiting their contribution. This problem can be exacerbated by a class featuring multiple nationalities, all of which utilise differing English accents and vocabulary in the same discussion:

Yeah some of them [Chinese students] don't, maybe there language skill are not good enough and don't have much confidence to talk in English... I think most Chinese students, their writing is better than speaking

(Respondent G)

This realisation that their current level of English speaking is not satisfactory to participate fully appears to be one of the more surprising difficulties for East-Asian students to contend with. A common solution discussed was the concept of 'Chinglish', where two languages are informally amalgamated to construct sentences. This is a common strategy for students encountering unfamiliar subject terminology in class:

Yes I am confident before I come here, but since I come here I found it's hard to.... Sometimes you can't find the exact word to express your feeling, and many of my English are 'Chinglish'

(Respondent H)

7.3.2 Maintenance of Original Culture

Whilst respondents showed an overall willingness to integrate into UK culture throughout their sojourn, any changes were not made at the expense of losing membership of their home culture. As previously mentioned, the temporary nature of most international students' stay in the UK acts as a deterrent to complete assimilation, and consequently East-Asian students make every effort to maintain close links with their home country.

Much as the existence of local or university societies may help to bridge the gap between UK and international students, other organisations exist which appear to promote close friendships between students from the same country. Northumbria Students' Union has separate societies for individuals from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam. It has been suggested that international students may seek solace in fellow nationals, particularly during the early stages of their sojourn. However, prolonged membership of such organisations may come at the expense of their integration with other cultural groups.

Respondents invest significant amounts of time and money in order to communicate regularly with family and friends in their home country. Although some do this via telephone, the advent of the Internet has made it a great deal easier to maintain such relationships. This often resulted in the perception that respondents had more friends in their home country than they do in the UK, and the fact that most would return home both in university holidays and immediately after their study. As will be discussed further in Section 7.5.3, respondents are keen to update their family and friends on life in the UK but are often hesitant to discuss negative issues for fear of unnecessarily worrying their relatives.

Respondents generally noted a fascination with UK culture amongst family and friends, and in many cases relatives believed that spending time in the UK would change the respondent completely. Indeed, one respondent recalled a phone call with a younger cousin, who had been surprised to learn that studying in the UK had not caused her to look more like an English person. In a culture where respect for elders is of utmost importance, East-Asian students feel empowered by the opportunity to inform family members of life in an unfamiliar culture: they can dispel myths, share positive experiences and gain the approval of friends for making what is perceived to be a brave decision to study abroad.

The variety and quality of food available in the UK in both supermarkets and restaurants was also a disappointment for many respondents. In the early stages of the sojourn, East-Asian students lack an awareness of

local shops and amenities, and as such struggle to buy groceries they can use to make 'traditional' Chinese food. Respondent H recalled how this problem led to her gaining large amounts of weight very quickly through eating UK convenience foods:

Yeah, Chinese food, because at the very beginning I had a lot of British food, pizza, cake, chocolate.... I put on two stones in six months. So now we cook every day, cook Chinese food, and I like Chinese food maybe more healthier

(Respondent H)

This preference for food which reminds them of home appears quite widespread amongst respondents. This may in part be down to problems defining what classes as 'English' food: Respondent H referred to traditional dishes such as roast beef and shepherd's pie, but others simply categorised English food as either convenience or takeaway. As Respondent F concluded after a study trip to South Africa: "English food is even not good than Africa". Unsurprisingly, East-Asian students consequently see English food as an unhealthy option and will only resort to it when they are short of time, such as during assessment periods.

This disappointment with English food can have a positive outcome, as it encourages students to cook food with fellow international students in a more social setting. Respondents reported a general dissatisfaction with the recreational facilities on offer in the UK, and the preparation of traditional food appears to be an important element of their leisure time. This often leads to students of different nationalities developing an

informal support network, sharing foods and reminiscing of their time back home. Indeed respondents commented that preparing and enjoying different foods may be a means of bringing local and international students closer together, despite the living arrangements in the university making this difficult to achieve (discussed in Section 7.3.4).

7.3.3 Challenges facing East-Asian students

At the time of the interviews, respondents had been in the UK for a minimum of three months, and in most cases around nine months. Having almost completed a full academic year in the UK, respondents were able to reflect on the biggest challenges they have faced throughout their sojourn.

Whilst universities, academics and even international students themselves express concern about the large cultural distance between East-Asia and the UK, the interviews suggest that a much-overlooked element of the student acculturation process is more practical in nature. Whilst all students will have previous education experience in college or university, and may even have some exposure to other cultures through friends and holidays, most have lived with their families up until the sojourn, and as such are faced with the immediate need to become independent:

Before I came here... I lived with my family and they managed all things for me, like... like I live with my Mum and she will do everything for me, cook, laundry, even buy things, yeah. But when I came here I will do everything by myself. This is the big difference

(Respondent I)

Much like UK students, moving away from family for the first time brings with it additional responsibilities for international students, and it may be that worrying about such issues takes attention away from the wider cultural differences they are also faced with. Household chores such as food preparation, cleaning and shopping are new to many East-Asian students, and this difficulty is compounded by the unfamiliar range of supermarkets in the UK. Further, some respondents commented on difficulties understanding a new currency which made it difficult to understand if they were buying products at a fair price:

The first few days is a very hard life because everything has to calculate because the currency is seven times different – 1 pound is equal to seven bahts in Malaysia – so whatever I want to buy “this is one pound is seven – that makes it very much expensive

(Respondent E)

It appears that these day-to-day challenges were not anticipated for the East-Asian students, and as such they struggle to deal with many organisations such as shops, banks and certain university services. Respondent H also commented that because the standard of living in the UK is higher, this has raised the prices of many products beyond what

they are used to in East-Asia. This may be an element of the application process that could be given more attention and allow students to have a more reasonable idea of average living costs in the UK.

Even the most confident and sociable East-Asian students will experience feelings of loneliness or homesickness at some point throughout their sojourn. Although some respondents reported being helped by seniors or family members early in their sojourn, the process of making friends with new house or course mates takes time, and the resultant loneliness can be very distressing. Respondent B commented that the lack of suitable leisure facilities for international students makes it more difficult to establish a network of friends quickly and may instead encourage people to simply stay in their halls of residence.

Respondent H, who moved to the UK with her husband, noted the importance of their mutual support, particularly in the early stages of the acculturation process:

*We do feel lonely here, but two people are better than just one,
so we support each other emotionally*

(Respondent H)

The same respondent commented that it was very important to have one person to confide in, although being overly dependent on her spouse was not always a good thing: sometimes there were things that she did not want to discuss with her husband, and it was these times when having a

wider friendship network was important. Thankfully in time most respondents agreed that it became easier to form friendships which made for a more enjoyable student experience:

This year is very much better than the first year because I don't have friends here. [In the first year] I don't have any friends, I come here alone, I don't have any relatives, I don't know anybody here. I just know one or two from my college. They were here as well but I don't know them. Like my seniors, I don't know them as well, actually. I come and just keep in touch with them through email – I never met them before – I don't know who they are. Everything is quite strange. I couldn't find anyone to speak to here. Most of the time I stick with the computer

(Respondent E)

It was disappointing to hear of instances of racial discrimination being experienced by East-Asian students. Although this was not on campus or initiated by local students, it is a real concern for the university that international students encounter such intimidation. Respondent J highlighted a number of instances where generally younger males have attacked groups of international students verbally or in some cases physically. The same respondent claimed that such instances were relatively widespread and often discussed by international students, and also commented that “I don't know how to deal with this kinds of things” (Respondent J).

Respondents were very keen to discuss their language capabilities when addressing their adaptation to life in the UK. As discussed in Section 7.3, many East-Asian students see improving their English language skills as a

key reason for studying in the UK, although for some it has proven difficult to practice their speaking ability with UK residents. An initial problem for East-Asian students is the accent used in North-East England, which differs from both what they have been taught in school and what they hear on UK and US television channels. Although not necessarily a major problem in the classroom, this can be a significant hurdle when informally communicating with local students or in other situations such as shopping.

Respondents often suggested that it was a lack of vocabulary that limited their ability to communicate with local students. This can result in international students referring to their first language to discuss topics in smaller groups, which in turn restricts their ability to contribute actively in class. This inability to express their knowledge and ideas may impact negatively upon the students' confidence, although some respondents are clearly heartened when they hear local students give similar answers to seminar questions:

In university, I find it hard to contribute in class sometimes. The local students don't know more than me, but they can say it quickly. But at least I do know it

(Respondent J)

7.3.4 Interaction with UK Students

You know, I'm quite disappointed because all my classmates are Asian. I knew maybe schools in the UK are happy to find overseas students because they can charge them more tuition fees. But however... the level of students come from outsides – it's too much – because why we want to learn in this country is because we want to touch the local people, local students. However, when we arrive here, all people are from India, China, Sri Lanka – countries like that. It's not what we hoped

(Respondent F)

One of the most regularly mentioned disappointments across respondents was the lack of any genuine, prolonged contact with UK students.

Respondent A highlighted the prospect of mixing with other cultures was a key influence in his decision to study in the UK, but in reality the opportunities to do this are very limited. The same respondent also stated that in reality the university education was the most important element of their sojourn, which means that friendships take second place at key assessment periods throughout the academic year. It was also suggested that because Chinese culture promotes close inter-personal relationships and an emphasis on family and close friends, this makes it more difficult for East-Asian students to be outgoing and actively seek new friendships with UK students.

Despite many respondents' enthusiasm to meet local students and appreciate their culture, the apparent clash in leisure preferences between cultures makes this problematic. Respondent E commented that the only opportunity he had to socialise with UK students was on a study trip, when

everybody had little option but to spend time together. Respondents had an overall perception that UK students could do more to welcome international students into the university and help them to adapt to academic life. Respondent F suggested that because they are being taught in their first language many UK students are overly-confident in class, something which does not impress international students. Whilst the current study does not address the attitudes of UK students towards their international counterparts, this area may warrant future research: it may be that they do not perceive any rewards from befriending international students, and fear that it may lead to them merely providing assistance to international students with any subject or language problems they may have.

Although respondents are dissatisfied with this lack of cross-cultural contact, overall they still have a positive view of UK students and almost accept that they can never form close friendships. This is an interesting viewpoint that may be passed down to new international students from their seniors, and further suggests that there is a need to investigate UK students' attitudes towards cross-cultural relationships in HE:

We just say hello to each other before we meet on campus... in fact I found British people very friendly, they can say hello to you, but they always keep distance I found. You can't be too close

(Respondent H)

As has been alluded to previously, international students often apply for particular subjects within the university, and this can result in a high proportion of international students on any one programme. Consequently a number of respondents reported that it was the small number of UK students on these courses that essentially became a minority group, with larger numbers of Chinese, Malaysian and Indian students dominating contact time. This appears to occur at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and led respondents to feel some sympathy with the UK students: much as they had expected a level of cross-cultural interaction, the local students would not have expected to be outnumbered by international students. Respondent G is part of a small postgraduate programme with only two UK students. Whereas one has made a deliberate effort to get involved and appreciate the diversity of cultures on the course, the other has been very distant and shows no willingness to communicate with non-UK students. Although in this case such a defensive approach appears to have caused no ill-feeling amongst the group, if such tension is widespread this may go some way to explaining the lack of cross-cultural relationships being formed.

Unfortunately, such dissatisfaction around cross-cultural contact also extends into university accommodation arrangements. In the majority of cases international students are allocated rooms in halls designated for international students only, and this does little to improve relations with UK students:

I didn't get to choose. I am just surprised that oh, everybody's Chinese – I thought I would be staying with the locals over here... maybe to brush up my communication skills. I think it's a good idea, but then I don't get it. So I think that's a problem... separation

(Respondent D)

Unsurprisingly, respondents view this policy as restrictive and having a detrimental effect on their language skills. This means that many international students are spending the majority of their time with fellow nationals, mainly speaking their native language both in class and in their accommodation. The fact that respondents were not consulted on their accommodation appears to be a particularly crucial issue. That said, respondents did show an awareness of the potential difficulties that could arise from sharing with UK students, with particular reference to alcohol consumption: "the lifestyle might be totally different. There might be a lot of conflicts" (Respondent B).

Despite the above barriers, the more confident respondents still believe that meaningful relationships can be developed, however it is up to the international student to take risks and be more outgoing, particularly early in their sojourn:

Having just Chinese friends is the easy way out. But you never get this chance again so why not take it?

(Respondent J)

Reflecting back on their time in the UK, respondents appear to be largely satisfied with their adaptation to UK life and the education system. Although loneliness is a common problem early in the sojourn, this appears to have been overcome by forming friendships with fellow nationals. Respondents seem to be proud of themselves for successfully dealing with the functional aspects of life in the UK, including setting up bank accounts and finding good value stores. The adaptation that has taken place appears to have been largely superficial in that East-Asian students have not gained a true picture and feel of life in the UK; instead they have merely learned how to survive here for the duration of their studies. The fact that respondents largely view their stay in the UK as a temporary one is seemingly crucial in the acculturation process, and indeed the sojourn may even heighten their affection towards their original culture:

Yeah because this is not your country.... you are strangers in fact here. You will miss home, and China is developing very quickly and when I come here I know how much I love my country

(Respondent H)

Respondents also indicated that although studying in the UK is a memorable experience it is unlikely to change how they live their lives significantly. Indeed, the speed at which they can forget about the UK is rapid. Respondent I commented that UK life can be completely forgotten even when visiting home during holidays. Returning home to their previous way of life, with qualification in hand, is the ultimate goal for many East-

Asian students, so it is little wonder that their acculturation process does not result in profound changes to their attitudes and behaviours:

I have no doubt that I can forget English culture nearly as fast as I have learnt it

(Respondent J)

7.4 Theme Two – Consumer Complaint Behaviour Across Cultures

The second key area explored in the interviews was the practice of complaining in different countries. Whereas most people can only compare other nations' consumer policies through short holidays, international students represent a very distinct group as they have experience of being a consumer in two cultures for a prolonged period of time. Recent research by Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006) suggests that the prevailing return policies of organisations in different countries may explain differing attitudes to complaining across cultures. Questions in this section were therefore designed to assess attitudes towards complaining and different return policies, and to draw out the experiences of East-Asian students in the UK which may provide further support to this viewpoint.

7.4.1 Attitudes towards Complaining

When I first came here, I was surprised to see people returning things to shops and generally standing up against the companies. I had never seen this back home. But in time I have been thinking, maybe this is a good thing. If we pay money for products and they are not working then we deserve to say something. My parents are very shocked when I tell them about the guy shouting in a restaurant

(Respondent J)

Prior to the interview recording, Respondent J had recalled a situation where he was sitting in a restaurant near to an English family who complained about “pretty much everything”, and this resulted in a very heated argument with the restaurant manager which was clearly visible to the other customers. The customer was eventually placated and left the restaurant, with staff blaming his outburst on excessive alcohol consumption. Aside from the fact that the manager should never have conducted the dispute in such a public domain, Respondent J’s shock at the incident is indicative of many East-Asian attitudes towards venting dissatisfaction in public. Particularly in Mainland China, children are taught the importance of ‘Chung-Yung’ or moderation, which discourages them from expressing anger and other negative emotions to strangers.

Respondent H expressed some surprise that company employees in the UK will be polite to customers even when they are complaining. This may reflect different organisational policies across cultures: whereas East-Asian companies may not expect complaints and therefore not train

employees for such an eventuality, handling awkward and aggressive customers is an integral part of much customer service training in the UK. It was once again noted that Chinese consumers “are more tolerable in fact. I mean.... once things happened, we always try to avoid the conflicts. We say ‘OK, OK, OK, OK’ and harmonious very important to our society” (Respondent H). Linked to the ideas of harmony and saving face, Respondent A felt that it would be difficult to return to a service after making a complaint, emphasising the importance of having close, positive relationships with companies.

In addition to the need to moderate behaviour, East-Asian consumers also believe that fate plays a large role in everyday life, including any negative consumer experiences they encounter. If they purchase a faulty product this will often be attributed to bad luck, which for cheaper products in particular makes them less likely to take action:

For me, I think for 100 products there must one or two that are not so good. It is acceptable

(Respondent C)

In contrast, some parts of East-Asia (most notably Hong Kong and Malaysia) are generally viewed as being more influenced by Western culture, and this has seemingly fed into their consumer behaviour. Respondent B noted how Hong Kong consumers have a great deal of choice and are acutely aware of their rights as consumers, which means many will complain should they become dissatisfied. Perhaps owing to the

limited sample size for the online survey, statistical analysis in Chapter Six provided no support for the view that Hong Kong consumers would act differently to other East-Asian nations.

Respondents generally agreed that the need to complain was largely dictated by the cost of the purchase in question. Whereas a cheap everyday purchase would often be put down to experience, products such as electrical items are of greater importance and may lead to more public forms of complaining. Regardless of the importance of the product or service, respondents showed a strong willingness to discuss bad experiences with family and close friends. The motivation for such discussions is often to protect; a dissatisfied consumer has the benefit of hindsight and can use this to warn others away from certain organisations:

Maybe I would do that sometimes if I had a bad experience... or maybe if they insist on buying that, I will just say well, beware of this and that, this and that. Check this product first... Yeah, to make sure they don't have the same bad experience as me

(Respondent D)

Respondents also suggested that such word of mouth activity can also be of assistance to the consumer, as they can talk through the experience and vent any negative emotions that they may not have felt comfortable sharing in public. Respondent G also suggested that parents are a helpful source of advice in such instances given their consumer experience. Although such support is of much practical value in their home countries, many respondents have experienced problems with companies during

their time in the UK (see Section 7.4.3), which limits the extent to which family and friends back home can offer practical help.

Perhaps due to the fact that complaining is viewed negatively in many East-Asian countries, respondents hold a degree of sympathy for staff responsible for handling complaints, who regularly come into contact with disgruntled and even aggressive customers. Such an attitude may in turn lead to respondents not complaining directly for fear of putting company employees under further pressure. It would be interesting to discover if such a sympathetic view extends towards university staff charged with resolving student complaints.

7.4.2 Organisational Return Policies

Historically, organisations in East-Asia have been opposed to offering customers any form of redress should they be dissatisfied with a product or service. Particularly in lesser developed areas, vendors tended to monopolise particular geographical areas, meaning consumers did not have the benefit of different companies competing for their business. As Mainland China and nearby countries began to thrive in the 1990's, a wider number of suppliers have emerged, which in theory gives the consumer greater freedom of choice.

Despite more advanced and competitive economies across East-Asia, respondents still felt that company policies on returning faulty products

were not particularly advanced. A consumer cannot expect to return a product simply because they have changed their mind; there has to be a serious fault for a company to even consider providing redress. In such cases the company would be particularly defensive and instead pass the blame onto the consumer:

Or maybe they will say 'oh next time, you should be careful. If you don't like it, try to not buy it'

(Respondent A)

Respondent B commented that despite Hong Kong's more historical link with Western cultures, consumers there still need to provide very detailed proof of the problem and that the company was at fault. There appears to be an in-built suspicion of consumers across East-Asia. Even the most honest consumer can be interrogated extensively before the vendor will accept any liability, seemingly with the assumption that consumers are guilty of fraudulent complaints. In cases where the vendor accepts liability for a problem, the inclination is always towards offering a replacement as opposed to a refund, even encouraging consumers to pay more and upgrade to a better quality alternative. Respondent D noted that only in cases of extreme dissatisfaction (e.g. personal injury) would the vendor be likely to offer a refund.

This defensive approach to returns contrasts notably with many companies' policies in the UK, where consumers have little hesitation in returning products that have performed even beyond their expectations.

Indeed, some organisations actively encourage consumers by offering 'money back guarantees' as an inducement to trial. Unsurprisingly, such an open policy is much preferred by respondents, who were very surprised to see consumers have such power in the marketplace. Respondents cited examples of returning products in line with these policies but remained sceptical as to its suitability in other countries:

I think the UK have excellent returns policies... but I think it could be misused in other countries, you know, maybe people are not very honest. They will get some products and use it well and then take it back and get another one – maybe they will do that

(Respondent F)

Interestingly, there appeared to be no resentment that organisations in their home countries had not adopted UK return policies, simply attributing this to "different shopping systems" (Respondent F). The same respondent also suggested that UK return policies may become more geographically widespread in the future, particularly given the rapid economic growth in Mainland China.

7.4.3 Dissatisfactory Experiences in the UK: Complaining in an Alternative Society

International students will encounter a variety of UK organisations throughout their sojourn. Even for those international students who only study in the UK for one academic year, they will need to purchase food, clothing and various utilities that in some cases may require a contractual agreement with the supplier. As has been suggested in Section 7.3.3, respondents on the whole remain impressed with the customer-centred policies and general standard of service offered in the UK. Initially when asked if they had complained to a UK company, most respondents could not immediately cite any examples, although further probing into their experiences with specific types of companies (e.g. banks, telecommunications companies etc.) uncovered a number of dissatisfactory experiences which have caused them to take action. It may be that respondents' initial hesitancy to share these experiences with an impartial observer is indicative of their general discomfort in venting negative emotions in public.

In line with previous discussions on returns policies, respondents cited examples where they had returned faulty products with only a limited amount of questions being asked by company employees. However many of the difficulties encountered by East-Asian students concerned more service-oriented organisations. Four separate respondents reported problems with their mobile phone provider, with Respondent A suggesting

that such companies are particularly nice to international students until they have signed a binding contract. Respondent E paid a significant deposit to a mobile phone supplier who ceased to trade shortly afterwards, but then continued to take regular payments from his account. What made this episode more distressing was the fact that the company had been recommended to him by a fellow national who had spent more time in the UK. The respondent visited the Citizens Advice Bureau for guidance but was ultimately unsuccessful in gaining redress.

At the beginning of their sojourn, East-Asian students have little knowledge of the UK marketplace and as such will put greater reliance on the advice of seniors and other fellow nationals. When this advice turns out to be ill-fated this can cause embarrassment amongst peer groups as well as financial difficulties. The same respondent had further trouble with the next contract he signed, when the company would not replace his faulty handset. Interestingly, this led to the respondent attributing the fault to bad fortune and blaming himself for the problems he had faced.

Two other respondents recalled similar experiences with mobile phone providers, including being double-charged for insurance and various problems with their contract agreements. In both cases the complaints were made officially and taken to the highest level with only limited success. Given that respondents had previously mentioned problems with their spoken English, it may be that this has impeded their ability to gain redress. Organisations may find it easier to make excuses and divert

attention from their mistakes when the customer is not perfectly fluent in English. As will be discussed below, it is possible that sojourners are not treated as favourably by organisations as they do not represent a large and profitable segment of the market.

Other issues cited by respondents focused on public transport.

Respondent C experienced problems with an online reservation system which caused her to miss her train and ruin a planned trip. The station manager upset the respondent by blaming her for the problem, where in reality a customer new to the system may have been treated more sympathetically. It was also interesting to note the reaction of her peers to the incident, who seemed unsurprised that a Chinese customer had not been treated fairly:

Actually, I'm feeling not so good because maybe this is the first time I saw this kind of thing so that's why I feel so sad... it's not their fault – it's my fault. Actually, I cannot accept all of their reasons. Later, I talked to some of my friends and they said it's just the thing in the UK

(Respondent C)

Respondent H had a similar experience using the local Metro system, whereby she misinterpreted the ticket instructions and was duly fined by Metro ticket inspectors. She wrote to customer services, however this was done with the intention of improving future service provision (by working with the university and international students) as opposed to disputing the fine:

we write this letter to let you know, to give you some suggestions, and maybe you can let the university know when the international students come... we didn't say we want the money back

(Respondent H)

When this letter was not responded to, it left the respondent feeling quite frustrated as their intention was not to claim back money but to help the company and other international students in the future. It was suggested that because there are only limited numbers of international students in any one geographical area, their needs may not be taken as seriously as those of permanent residents when in reality they should be researched in further detail (Respondent F). Such a criticism of marketers has been previously raised in the literature, although the growing numbers of temporary and permanent immigrants in the UK may have made some organisations more responsive to the needs of such groups.

In many of the above examples, respondents have shown a pro-active approach to seeking redress from organisations (albeit with limited success). It may be that some international students do not believe they should change their attitudes towards complaining just because they are living and studying abroad (Respondent B). Respondent C suggested that she was taught to stand up for herself in consumer situations by her parents and she would continue to follow their advice:

Yeah. That's the way that my parents taught me. They always do something like that so that's the way they always taught me. If you are not accepting some reasons that the company explains to you, you need to react. You need to tell them why. Ask them why. That's the most important

(Respondent C)

It is important to note that Respondent C was perhaps the most confident respondent interviewed and also exhibited the highest standard of English. Such qualities may have enabled her to act in much the same way as she would in her home country, however as already discussed language ability may act as a significant barrier to public complaining for less accomplished English speakers.

The opposing viewpoint is that East-Asian students, who may feel perfectly comfortable complaining in their home country, would not feel the same way in the UK. This may be directly linked to their acculturation style: whereas an assimilated individual may feel part of UK culture and consequently at ease making a complaint, the same may not be said for a separated or marginalised individual:

Yeah, maybe in China to try to solve the problem. But in UK sometimes I will think 'oh, it's not my home. Maybe just forget it. It's not a big thing'

(Respondent A)

Respondents also suggested that an element of suspicion and even prejudice may surround complaints from migrating groups. After reciting

her experience of complaining about the local Metro system, Respondent H suggested that some companies may believe that Chinese students are trying to take advantage of UK companies. Similarly, Respondent J successfully returned a faulty item of clothing but was still aware of some suspicion from the company employee. Whereas it is unclear whether this suspicion is confined only to non-UK residents, this perceived discrimination may result in significant negative word of mouth amongst the international student body and cause future students to shop elsewhere:

When I returned a shirt once the person was looking at me strange, it is almost like they were not happy that I was in another country trying to get my money back even though I had done nothing wrong. It was the shirt that was badly made. That member of staff made me very uncomfortable

(Respondent J)

Given their natural hesitancy to vent dissatisfaction in public, it may be particularly ironic if UK companies were to be suspicious of complaints from East-Asian students. This certainly points to the need for greater research on complaint handling from the company perspective: it may be that frontline staff handling complaints are naturally more suspicious of some demographic groups than others.

7.5 Theme Three: Student Complaint Behaviour

The final theme covered in the interviews built upon the previous generic discussion of complaining by focusing specifically on the HE sector.

Despite efforts to understand complaint behaviour across service sectors, research has yet to address the complaint attitudes and behaviours of East-Asian students (Wright et al., 1996). Given the often higher fees paid by international students studying in the UK, it may be that this raises expectations and subsequently increases the chances of dissatisfactory incidents. A knowledge of East-Asian students' attitudes towards complaining could help universities to develop suitable feedback mechanisms and handle complaints appropriately.

7.5.1 East-Asian Students' Attitudes towards Complaining

The UK HE sector benefits from a very positive reputation across the globe, particularly in the Middle-East and East-Asia, where up until very recently the opportunities to receive a high standard of university education without studying abroad were limited. As has been addressed in Chapter Three, recently this apparent dominance over universities across the globe has come under threat, which is one of the reasons student satisfaction has developed into a key goal for many institutions. The increasing use of customer care terminology such as 'satisfaction' and 'retention' has led some academics to suggest that today's students are instead showing characteristics of becoming educational consumers.

As was indicated in Section 7.3, respondents generally have a very positive image of UK universities prior to enrolment and this, combined with the high cost of tuition in the UK, can lead to them expecting a better standard of education than they have previously received in their home country. Respondent B noted that students may behave more like customers because of the importance of their education and its implications for their future career. This ties in with much CCB theory which suggests that product importance is a major determinant in consumer expectations and reactions to dissatisfaction.

It would appear that respondents only became aware that they pay far higher tuition fees than UK students after they have become settled in the university. This disparity was met with derision by many respondents and the wider international student body, who may expect additional support in return for their investment:

I feel that I pay more compared with the local students, yeah. I'm supposed to be receiving more than them... Yeah, I think the local people only need to pay about £3,000 is it?

(Respondent E)

Interestingly, Respondent J commented that English students had similarly high expectations on the standard of service they should receive from the university, but were shocked to hear that international students were paying considerably more for the same service. Indeed, it may be that English students who do not have contact with an international cohort are

not even aware of this discrepancy. It would appear that respondents would like this disparity to be directly justified to them, ideally prior to commencement of the course.

The majority of respondents claimed to view themselves as both students and consumers in terms of their education. Respondents respect the knowledge of academic staff but at the same time would be willing to complain should they feel that their student experience is not meeting their expectations. Again though there was the suggestion that such complaints may be made in order to help the university as well as benefit the individual: "we have our right to tell them what is wrong with their system. They need to know what is wrong" (Respondent C). Interestingly, Respondent H believed that in the majority of cases they liked to be considered as students, however they may start behaving more like traditional consumers if things are not going well. This viewpoint indicates that East-Asian students are not naturally inclined and may even feel uncomfortable with behaving like consumers, but are prepared to do so if they feel the quality of their education is compromised:

Yes sometimes my class mates will say 'We pay our tuition fee, it's our right to receive a high quality teaching here'. Sometimes we will have that kind of feeling, but when we get along with our lecturers I never feel that I am the customer

(Respondent H)

This apparent willingness to complain is mediated by a common fear amongst respondents: that complaining about a lecturer or course may

affect the grades they receive from the university. As has already been discussed, the outcome of the university experience has major implications on students' future careers, and respondents appear very cautious that formal complaints may compromise their final degree classification:

I fear that maybe he will fail my paper or something like that if I do it. So I think that's a problem. With a shop the only relation between me and them is a TV that I bought so, but here it's long-term and I am quite scared that it will affect my studies because of my complaints

(Respondent D)

This common fear led to the suggestion that complaints could be made anonymously to protect the individual, particularly if the complaint is being made on behalf of a group of students. However, the personal nature of many complaints makes such an idea difficult to implement. Respondent J even suggested that as complaints may be embarrassing, it may be better to avoid the classes of the lecturer concerned. Obviously such a solution is not ideal for either student or university, as this would result in decreased attendance and the faculties involved would remain unaware of any problems in their delivery.

It was also suggested that having close, personal relationships with key staff (for example Programme Leaders) may be key to encouraging feedback from students. Respondent G noted that at first it was sometimes awkward to express dissatisfaction to staff, but over time this

became more comfortable and problems could be discussed informally and not have to be put in writing. It should be noted though that this viewpoint came from a student in a small cohort, and it may be particularly difficult to build such relationships on courses with larger numbers of students.

7.5.2 Dissatisfactory Experiences in Northumbria University

As the university experience varies so greatly by individual, it is perhaps unsurprising that respondents reported a wide variety of dissatisfactory experiences from their time at the university. In many cases, these were accepted to be relatively minor in nature (for example, Respondent H commented on the occasional unreliability of a shuttle bus that connects two campuses) and as such these sorts of incidents were never likely to result in a formal complaint. However, one frequently mentioned issue was contact with academic members of staff, in particular dissertation supervisors. Respondents often claimed that it could be difficult to arrange a meeting with lecturers, and in some cases Programme leaders were not willing to help international students with even the simplest of queries. Such problems are exacerbated because other students are seen to have more willing, approachable lecturers who are happy to spend time with their students. For some respondents, the only solution to this was simply attempt the assessment without any further guidance: “Just go blindly and do whatever I can” (Respondent D).

As discussed in Section 7.3, a key difference between studying in their home countries and the UK was the differing levels of contact time: whilst many East-Asian colleges offer 30 hours of scheduled classes per week, the figure can be as low as six to eight hours in the UK. Whilst this is designed to encourage the students' independent learning, it was suggested that this doesn't necessarily provide good value for money, especially for those who struggle to adapt to a more Western approach to learning. This frustration is furthered by regular holidays (such as inter-semester breaks) and even industrial action taken by staff:

And the university suddenly has a holiday – it's not a bank holiday – and just some of the lecturers have taken part in the strike activity. I think that it's not our business. Our lectures cost money. Our lecture is about £100 per day

(Respondent E)

Linked to a lack of contact time, respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with the limited opportunities they have to interact with UK students. As discussed in Section 7.3.4, this relates to the separate living arrangements for international students which denied respondents an opportunity to improve their English through continuous first-hand contact. Given that for many of the respondents cross-cultural interaction was a key motivator for studying in the UK, this certainly appears to be an area that universities may wish to consider for future cohorts.

Respondent G provided the only case of serious dissatisfaction that was uncovered through the interview process. After a flatmate had set off a fire

alarm in their university accommodation, each student in the flat was fined £50 because there was not sufficient proof to punish only one student. Given student finances this was too large a fine to simply accept, and consequently their complaint was taken to the accommodation manager, student services and even the university secretary. Whilst the dispute was still ongoing at the time of the interview, this suggests that whilst other dissatisfactory incidents across the university may not result in a formal complaint, this changes when there is a direct financial cost associated with the incident. This view is supported by the findings of the SCBS reported in Chapter six, where the vignette that involved a library fine received higher scores for public complaining than a problem with assessment. Although students are aware of the high costs of studying abroad, they may not directly link dissatisfactory incidents involving lectures, academic staff or facilities to their tuition fees as they are already fully paid, in many cases by the parents rather than the actual students.

7.5.3 Responding to Dissatisfactory Incidents

Chapter Three outlined a variety of potential responses to dissatisfactory experiences in a university environment. Whilst an understanding of which responses are preferred by respondents was gathered via the online survey, a potential limitation of these findings was the hypothetical nature of the scenarios provided. It was hoped that addressing the issue in face to face interviews may provide some validity to the SCBS findings.

In line with the SCBS findings, respondents overall reported a pro-active approach to dissatisfactory incidents, with many discussing any problems directly with their Programme Leader. This appeared to be particularly common on courses with smaller cohorts, where stronger relationships had been developed with the relevant lecturer. Respondents also suggested that this would often be done prior to consulting other students so as not to influence their opinions: "If I don't like this lecture it's my own thing – not the others. I don't want to affect all of them" (Respondent C).

When contacting academic members of staff directly, there is a split between those who would be most comfortable doing this face to face or via written communication. In many cases, the preference for communicating in writing was based on fears over their English speaking ability and also general fears over the awkwardness of a complaint scenario:

In my opinion – face to face talking about something, I'm not sure about my English is quite fluent to make everybody understand... If I just write it down or send email, maybe this way will be peaceful

(Respondent C)

Respondent F suggested that the seriousness of the complaint may well dictate the preferred means of contact: whilst simple issues can be resolved in a quick chat, more serious complaints may need to be officially documented for future reference. Those who suggested that face to face contact was most suitable highlighted the importance of body language, as

students could use gestures and their emotions to convey the seriousness of the issue (Respondent H). In sensitive situations, respondents indicated a preference for contacting another lecturer for advice on how to resolve the problem. This may not be the most comfortable position for an academic to be faced with, but is undoubtedly linked with respondent fears that a direct complaint may compromise their future grades (Section 7.5.1).

Another means of providing negative feedback within the university is the Student Representative system. Nominated students from each course are responsible for collating the views of the student body and regularly feeding these back to academic staff. Two of the interview respondents were currently in the role of student representative, which is often sold to students as a good additional activity to add to their CVs after graduation. In principal, most respondents thought that having a fellow student to confide in was a useful facility, however it did not necessarily work well in practice. Respondent C claimed that such a scheme was not necessary with smaller cohorts owing to closer relationships with Programme Leaders, whilst Respondent B didn't know who the nominated representative was on their course. It may be that the scheme is not sufficiently promoted to students: Respondent A believed that his time as student representative was of limited use to the university because other students didn't utilise the system:

*People think 'It's not my job. It's your job to collect the opinions'.
They don't care about it*

(Respondent A)

It would be of interest to know why students do not take advantage of this feedback mechanism. A possible explanation is that such feedback may be of greater benefit to future students rather than themselves, and as such individual problems may be dealt with more directly.

Unsurprisingly, respondents reported a large tendency to share negative experiences with fellow students, be they from the same course or accommodation. This more private form of complaining may occur because:

- Students are unsure of the correct channels to use to register a formal complaint (as suggested by Respondents E and I);
- The issue is not serious enough to warrant more formal action;
- A complaint may compromise future grades (Section 7.5.1).

Sharing problems with fellow students is a logical response to dissatisfaction as they may be experiencing similar issues and can therefore offer sympathy and practical advice. In contrast, respondents do not tend to view their families as an appropriate avenue to express their dissatisfaction. As has been discussed in Section 7.4.1, respondents suggested that for more general consumer situations experienced parents may be a useful source of advice, however this does not extend to HE:

No, no. They don't know anything about this year, because they've never been to university before so they don't know what kind of persons you should approach

(Respondent E)

As suggested by Respondent A, the reasons behind this may be purely practical in nature: it is unlikely that their parents have studied in the UK and therefore may not be in a position to offer suitable guidance. Alternatively, East-Asian students may be hesitant to share these problems with their parents as they do not wish to cause them unnecessary concern. Parents have paid out large sums of money to enable their child to study abroad and would naturally worry about their children if they thought they were not getting the most out of the student experience. East-Asian students may feel that their parents' concerns would be heightened by the physical distance between them (approximately 5,000 miles) and as such keep any negative experiences from them.

The final issue addressed within student complaint behaviour was attitudes towards complaining in colleges and universities in their respective home countries. Most respondents will have either attended a partner college of Northumbria or another separate institution prior to moving to the UK and may be able to compare the practice of complaining between the two education systems. As was discussed in Section 7.3, respondents suggested that academic staff in their home countries were

not as knowledgeable as UK lecturers, and this comparison may result in dissatisfaction with their home college after moving to the UK.

Once again the issue of language ability was pivotal in the complaint process. Respondent A noted that it is easier to provide feedback in their first language which can reduce the level of misunderstanding between staff and students. However, despite facing no language barriers in their home country, issues surrounding respect for authority figures may deter them from complaining formally:

In China, I think it's quite difficult to complain about this kind of teacher because they are quite high in our social station, I think. When you want to complain about them in China, I think, firstly you need to go to students' union and ask their help

(Respondent C)

Although Respondent A noted that his college in Beijing also utilised a student representative system, the most common solution to dissatisfaction amongst respondents is to use a third party such as the student union, and try to get numerous fellow students to sign a petition. It appears that in many cases individual complaints are not taken seriously, so strength in numbers is the most efficient way to resolve problems. This approach also provides anonymity for the students and can help to maintain harmony in future dealings with lecturers. For similar reasons Respondent I noted that suggestion boxes were also a common means of providing feedback. Despite many complaints being very personal in nature, it may be that providing more anonymous feedback channels

would encourage greater numbers of East-Asian students to share their negative experiences with the university.

7.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has used data from the semi-structured interviews to discuss three key themes central to the thesis (student acculturation, complaining across cultures and student complaint behaviour). These findings, alongside the data uncovered via the Online Survey (Chapter Six), will now be discussed alongside existing literature to address the four research questions that have provided the focus for the data collection process. Chapter Eight will also include recommendations for universities with East-Asian student cohorts, consider the limitations of the research process and also review the original contribution to knowledge offered in the current study.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

8.1 Overview of Chapter

Following from the data analysis presented in Chapters Six and Seven, the following discussion will relate these findings to the four research questions that have guided this study, making inferences from the data where appropriate and relating back to the existing literature on acculturation and CCB that was introduced in the literature review. Given the pragmatic nature of this study, these findings will lead to the development of practical recommendations that may be of relevance to UK universities with East-Asian student cohorts. The chapter will also consider the overall limitations of the study, identify areas for future research based upon the findings and re-address the original contribution to knowledge that has been made by this research.

8.2 Research Question 1: Does a relationship exist between the acculturation style adopted by East-Asian students and their consumer complaint behaviour styles?

Previous studies (such as those reported in Section 2.5) have provided evidence that acculturation is a relevant determinant across various facets of consumer behaviour (e.g. Lee and Um, 1992). This research question attempted to build on this specific field of literature by investigating if

acculturation styles were associated with complaint behaviours, which were tapped in the EAAM and SCBS respectively.

Migrants who adopt either an assimilation or integration acculturation style typically show a higher propensity to engage in behaviours of the host culture as opposed to their original culture (Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2002). In the context of CCB, this would result in East-Asian students adopting more public complaint behaviours that are traditionally associated with Western cultures (Liu and McClure, 2001). However, results from the Pearson correlation in Chapter Six show no significant association between assimilation and public complaining (.150). However, those scoring higher on the integration sub-scale were significantly more likely to engage in public complaining (.318 – significant at 0.01 level). Therefore Hypothesis 2 can be partially supported, although overall it may have been expected to find stronger correlations between the EAAM and SCBS. It is logical that integrated East-Asian students would be more likely to publicly complain: they will be comfortable discussing dissatisfactory issues with people from various cultures, and their higher self-confidence may make them more likely to directly address a lecturer, be it face to face or via email. This fits with the recent work of Park (2005), who concluded that Asian consumers are prepared to use the internet to express complaints in an aggressive manner.

Liu and McClure (2001) also noted that individuals from collectivist cultures often resort to word of mouth with close family and friends, largely

owing to their desire to avoid conflict and maintain harmony (Hofstede, 1980; Le Claire, 1993). Hypotheses 3 and 4 built on this by suggesting that those who adopt either a separation or marginalisation acculturation style (i.e. show no willingness to engage in the host culture) would continue to express their dissatisfaction via private channels. However, neither hypothesis was supported by the Pearson correlation: both separation and marginalisation were not significantly associated with private complaint behaviours (.083 and -.03 respectively).

Indeed, it was noted that the average scores for private complaint behaviours were extremely high across all acculturation styles, suggesting that all East-Asians will share dissatisfactory incidents via word of mouth. Particularly for those students who lack confidence in the English language, discussing dissatisfaction privately may be a useful means of 'venting their spleen' and far more comfortable than lodging a formal complaint.

Although the literature on CCB suggests that companies should make every effort to eliminate private complaint behaviour due to its potential 'knock-on' effect on other consumers (e.g. Heung and Lam, 2003), this may not be as applicable in the context of HE. Regardless of East-Asian students' decision of whether to publicly complain, the desire to use word of mouth to share negative feelings privately and protect others will remain with them throughout their sojourn. Indeed, Gilly (1995) has previously highlighted that sharing shopping experiences with fellow nationals is of great importance to both temporary and permanent migrants. The current

study also indicates that such negative word of mouth will not be shared with family back home (see Section 8.5) for fear of unnecessarily worrying loved ones. This suggests that such word of mouth will be shared only with fellow students facing similar issues, and would not necessarily be damaging to future university recruitment efforts in their home countries. However, it should be noted that although any negative word of mouth may not filter through to prospective students, it may be the cause of decreased morale and attendance from dissatisfied students.

It is possible that the online survey's failure to fully support the hypotheses may be a consequence of the use of hypothetical scenarios in the SCBS. As stated by Hernandez and Fugate (2004), care must be taken when intentions are used as a proxy for behaviour. In this case, it may be that respondents have attempted to convey a positive image by over-exaggerating their propensity to stand up for themselves and publicly complain. As will be discussed in Section 8.8, future research may wish to eliminate this potential problem by using real-life complaint experiences as opposed to hypothetical scenarios, and linking these with the acculturation styles of the respondent.

Other results from the online survey did provide some support to the notion that acculturation styles may be relevant in how East-Asian students' express their dissatisfaction. For example, those scoring higher on the integration sub-scale were significantly less likely to engage in non-behavioural complaint behaviours ($-.195$ – significant at 0.05 level),

possibly because they have the confidence to deal with problems directly rather than merely forgive and forget. Results also indicated that integrated individuals were the most likely to use a third party to resolve a complaint, a logical finding given that integrated individuals will have developed friendships with UK students and consequently a knowledge of the relevant bodies they can turn to for advice. In contrast, those scoring higher on the separation sub-scale were more likely to engage in non-behavioural responses (.236 – significant at 0.01 level). Such individuals have not integrated with UK students and consequently may not be aware of the avenues available to submit a complaint, essentially forcing them not to do anything about the problem.

It was also found that those adopting either a separation or marginalisation acculturation style were less likely to adopt public complaint behaviours (-.14 and -.08 respectively). Although these correlations were not statistically significant, it is logical to assume that such groups would not have the language ability, confidence or knowledge of relevant complaint channels necessary to register a public complaint. Gentry, Jun and Tansuhaj (1992) noted that when migrants become alienated they often require reassurance from marketers to help them adapt, something which may well extend to CCB: universities should make an effort to explain the importance of complaints to enrolling international students and also alleviate any fears they may have about complaining (e.g. fears that complaints may compromise grades – see Section 8.6).

In conclusion, the data collected failed to provide clear evidence that acculturation and CCB are related in a HE context. As previously discussed, this may well be a product of the hypothetical scenarios used to operationalise CCB. However it may be that for students on a temporary sojourn, the acculturation experience is too brief to change their complaint behaviours. To this end, this research question should ideally be tested on groups of permanent as opposed to temporary migrants, who because of their longer stay in the UK will have a wider range of complaint experiences across various product and service categories. This will be discussed further in Section 8.8.

8.3 Research Question 2: What are the acculturation challenges experienced by East-Asian students whilst adapting to life in the UK?

Much of the previous literature on student acculturation suggests that the major obstacles faced by international students include homesickness, cultural differences and financial hardship (Shih and Brown, 2000; Leung, 2001). In contrast, the current study suggests that the major challenges faced by East-Asian students are the more functional, everyday aspects of living overseas. Respondents reported trouble with handling visa arrangements, finding accommodation and arranging contractual agreements with companies such as banks and telecommunication providers. In some cases these issues were a source of great concern and actually reduced the attention paid to the wider cultural differences respondents were exposed to. Obviously these issues are of the greatest

concern at the early stages of their sojourn when confidence is low and the student lacks the friendship networks to obtain relevant advice easily.

An equally large challenge faced by East-Asian students was that of living independently from their parents. This was not deemed to be particularly difficult on an emotional level as students use the internet to maintain strong bonds with those back home: instead it was the responsibility of looking after themselves and their accommodation that provided an unexpected challenge. Tasks such as cooking, cleaning and managing their finances may have previously been controlled by their parents, and the sudden transfer of these tasks to the student may leave many feeling over-awed.

East-Asian students new to the UK also lack an awareness of where to shop for the best value groceries they can use to make their preferred dishes. Gilly (1995) noted that short-term immigrants often refer to fellow students for guidance in such situations, however the difficulties in making immediate friends mean that they have to 'fend for themselves' as a consumer from the outset (Penaloza, 1989). Respondents generally focused on price and convenience in their shopping criteria, which supports the earlier work of Shim and Chen (1996) on Chinese immigrants in the US.

The above emphasis on the functional aspects of living abroad suggests that East-Asian students may adopt something of a 'survival' approach to

their sojourn. Interestingly, Leung (2001) had previously suggested that Chinese students typically require additional support services to ensure they handle the many challenges of being an international student. Instead of worrying about the cultural distance between the UK and their home countries, the issues that cause the most worry and distress are those that cause immediate disruption to their everyday lives. As will be discussed in Section 8.6, this is possibly something that is not currently covered in international student induction programs.

In Chapter Two it was indicated that the decision to study in the UK would always be a voluntary one, which has been suggested to increase an individual's desire to integrate (Gilly, 1995). However, the current research uncovered examples of respondents who were essentially forced into studying abroad to improve their career choices. Further to this, upon arrival international students are often forced to integrate with a wide variety of cultures, as universities wish to promote a truly international campus (Bochner, McLeod and Lin, 1977). Should a student be studying in the UK against their own personal wishes, this is likely to act as a significant barrier to acculturation, and such students may be more likely to be marginalised as a result. Another barrier to the acculturation process is the length of stay; most respondents suggested that as they were certain to return to their home country upon graduation, this limited their desire to completely adapt to UK life. This finding is in line with the previous suggestion by Ghaffarian (2001) that immigrants may well resist

assimilation should they believe their stay in another culture is a temporary one.

Perhaps the most predictable challenge faced by East-Asians concerns language ability, which has been identified as a major obstacle for international students (e.g. Kara and Kara, 1996; Ueltschy, 2002). Most interview respondents had been speaking English for many years and may even have attended English speaking schools, yet when they arrived in the UK they were surprised to discover that their English was not good enough to communicate effectively, both in writing and orally. For some this realisation has led to them speaking English only when absolutely necessary (previously discovered in the US by Sodowsky and Plake, 1992). As suggested by Moghaddam, Taylor and Lolande (1987), problems with language also encouraged respondents to join ethnic and religious organisations such as Student Union societies and the Christian Fellowship in an effort to improve their speaking skills and maintain friendships with co-nationals.

Keel and Drew (2004) identified a lack of language ability as the single biggest barrier to integration, and it may well be that the level of English language proficiency required by UK universities is not sufficient for the student to integrate away from the classroom. Ideally, the sojourner will have plenty of opportunities to develop their language skills further throughout their study, however the interviews indicated that interaction with UK residents is relatively rare.

Forming new friendships upon arrival in the UK appears to be another significant challenge facing East-Asian students. Whilst some respondents appeared to be very confident and pro-active in making new friends, the majority are conscious of their imperfect English and may be made to feel unwelcome by UK students. East-Asian culture teaches the importance of having personal relationships with only those closest to you, so it can take time for them to develop new friendship networks. This is made all the more difficult because of the wide variety of nationalities that are represented on campus (Bochner, McLeod and Lin, 1977) and the large cultural distance between East-Asian and UK students (Lee and Um, 1992). This difficulty in forming relationships is also experienced by permanent first generation immigrants (Leong and Chou, 1994), suggesting that this problem is not merely confined to the student environment.

It may be that UK students do not view relationships with international students as worthwhile, and they may even be suspicious of those who may only befriend them to gain help with their studies. Indeed, Florack et al. (2003) noted how host culture members who are threatened by immigrants or sojourners are less open to integration. The findings of this research suggest that more needs to be done to understand UK student attitudes towards international cohorts: it may be that certain nationalities are favoured by UK students when forming new friendships (Novas et al., 2005). This may be investigated by utilising the Interactive Acculturation

Model proposed by Bourhis et al. (1997) which suggests that the role of the host culture in the acculturation process is a pivotal one.

An issue likely to cause large concern for university managers is racial discrimination, with some respondents citing incidents of racism away from the university campus. Whilst university environments are not known for such prejudices (Richardson and Skinner, 1990), the surrounding areas may be home to less tolerant local people who perhaps feel threatened by a growing international student body. Greenland and Brown (2005) suggested that the existence of prejudice can severely change attitudes towards the acculturation process, and although respondents did not appear to be particularly distressed about such instances universities should seek to investigate the extent of such prejudice in areas commonly visited by international students.

8.4 Research Question 3: What are East-Asian students' experiences of complaining in different cultures?

The majority of literature into the role of culture in CCB suggests that differences in complaining across nations can be attributed to various cultural dimensions (e.g. individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance: Hofstede, 2001). However more recently it has been suggested that these differences may instead be attributed to the economic conditions and return policies in different parts of the world: countries in which organisations show a pro-active attitude towards

complaints are more likely to receive negative customer feedback (Blodgett, Hill and Bakir, 2006). It is therefore of interest to understand the experiences of East-Asian students as consumers, who have been exposed to differing shopping systems in both the UK and their home countries for a considerable period.

Respondents conveyed genuine shock at the aggressiveness of some UK consumers when they were dissatisfied. Arguments were often acted out in public and the consumer had greater power than is often the case in East-Asia. Respondents were equally startled that company staff remained polite throughout such heated confrontations. All of this has led to a degree of sympathy being held for frontline employees which may deter students from complaining themselves.

Despite respondents coming from a range of East-Asian countries where slight differences in shopping practices may be expected, in general returns policies in their home countries were seen as primitive in comparison with the UK. In East-Asia, companies are reluctant to accept responsibility for product failures, require comprehensive proof of the problem at hand, and even then are unlikely to offer a full refund. In contrast, respondents were both surprised and impressed with UK organisations' more open approach, where refunds can be secured simply if the consumer changes their mind. This comparison fits in with the work of Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006) who classified the UK as 'Liberal and Consumer Oriented' whereas East-Asian countries were deemed as

offering 'No returns or exchanges'. Raven and Foxman (1994) noted that when companies are not open to complaints, Chinese consumers react by utilising third parties such as newspapers anonymously to convey their disappointment, something which is not deemed as necessary by UK consumers.

It was interesting to note respondents' general discomfort with sharing their dissatisfactory experiences in the UK. As previously illustrated by Liu, Watkins and Yi (1997), East-Asian culture does not promote the sharing of negative emotions in public settings, which may explain why it took additional probing for the researcher to uncover such experiences. What has become clear from the findings is the importance of product cost in the decision of whether to complain publicly: aligned with the findings of Broadbridge and Marshall (1995), the more expensive purchases are most likely to induce formal complaints. The findings also support what Singh and Pandya (1991) coined the 'Threshold Effect' – all of the dissatisfactory experiences that prompted the respondents to complain publicly could be deemed to be important, high-involvement purchases.

All of the dissatisfactory experiences discussed by respondents involved service-based organisations. Warren and Gilbert (1993) noted how it can be particularly difficult to ensure consistency in service-based transactions, and this is exacerbated when simultaneously serving consumers from a variety of cultures (De Ruyter, Perkins and Wetzels, 1995). In conflicts with telecommunications and transport organisations,

respondents typically used a combination of public and third party complaining, a pro-active approach which is generally viewed as an opportunity for marketers to recover the situation (Richard and Adrian, 1995). As Heung and Lam (2003) have noted, consumers with higher education status are most likely to complain directly to the organisation as they are equipped with sufficient knowledge and communication skills.

This public complaining provides a contrast to the more dated research of Andreassen (1977), who believed as many of 60% of dissatisfied consumers would not complain. Thorelli (1982) had also suggested that typically Chinese consumers would lack a knowledge of how and where to complain, although this may not be applicable to younger, more travelled East-Asians. In some cases, complaints were made to protect or recover lost funds, however one respondent recalled an incident with a local transport provider when their complaint was not done to dispute the financial penalty but to inform future policy and protect other international students. This supports the views of Heung and Lam (2003) that Asians do not always engage in complaint behaviour for their own personal gain.

It was unfortunate to note that in many of the cases discussed throughout the interviews, respondents were ultimately unsuccessful in obtaining the desired complaint outcome. Organisations sometimes showed a level of hostility that would not be expected in the UK by authors such as Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006): in one instance a letter of complaint was not acknowledged and in another situation the consumer was directly blamed

for the problem. Such actions may lower the confidence of East-Asian students and deter them from complaining in the future. Indeed, respondents argued that international student feedback is not taken seriously by organisations as they do not represent a sufficiently large proportion of their target market. The above points appear to be linked to Bearden and Teel's (1983) study which concluded that many consumers do not complain because they lack confidence or feel it will not make any difference.

Another factor that may explain these unsuccessful complaints is the language barrier. As discussed in Section 8.3, East-Asian students are often surprised that their language skills are not of a sufficient standard to interact with wider society; this may well extend to complaint situations where they lack the ability to accurately convey their dissatisfaction. Indeed, Cornwell, Bligh and Babakus (1991) found that a similar problem existed for Hispanics moving to the US.

Whilst the findings have indicated that East-Asian students have shown a willingness to complain whilst in the UK, it is not clear whether this behaviour differs from what they would do in their home country. Respondents discussed how they were taught attitudes towards complaining by their parents, and it may be that these stay with them throughout their sojourn despite the different shopping systems in the UK. In addition, some respondents showed a hesitancy to complain in another country and even a belief that employees were suspicious of non-UK

residents when returning items. Therefore, whilst respondents were largely impressed with general consumer policy in the UK, it is not clear if this has led to different complaint behaviours as suggested by Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006).

8.5 Research Question 4: What are East-Asian students' attitudes towards complaining about the university should they become dissatisfied?

Arambewela, Hall and Zuhair (2005) claimed that university reputation is a particularly crucial criterion for international students when choosing a university, and this has been a significant selling point for UK and US universities in recent years. However, a strong reputation results in heightened expectations of the student experience, and this is exacerbated by the high fees paid by international students to study in the UK. As Bolting (1989) has shown, consumers are more likely to show their dissatisfaction when the product or service carries higher importance, something which certainly applies to HE.

When East-Asian students became aware that they pay higher fees than UK students for the same level of tuition, this was a source of dissatisfaction and led some to expect a higher level of service. This ties in with the Equity Theory proposed by Erevelles and Leavitt (1992): UK students were surprised to learn of this differential and the reasons for it remain unclear to the student population.

It would be expected that higher fees would lead to East-Asian students considering themselves as consumers as opposed to simply students (Webb and Jagun [1997] suggested there was no reason why universities should not treat students as consumers). However, a key finding of this research is that East-Asian students still view themselves as students in the majority of cases: it is only when they become dissatisfied that they show a willingness to behave more like consumers and provide feedback to the university. As a result of their cultural values, being critical of the university can prove to be an uncomfortable situation for many students, although this can be alleviated if the student has a close, personal relationship with a key member of staff such as a Programme Leader. Having such a relationship provides the student with a non-confrontational, sincere and non-public complaint mechanism that Liu, Watkins and Yi (1997) see as crucial when serving Asian consumers.

In terms of specific dissatisfactory experiences, a major issue was the availability of lecturers for advice on assignments, something which Dolinsky (1994) had earlier noted was a chief cause of dissatisfaction. This is made all the more noticeable by students comparing the quality of their lecturers via word of mouth, which may cause students who were previously satisfied with their lecturers to re-evaluate their service. Connected to this, students from East-Asia are often left confused by the amount of independent study time that is allocated in the UK. East-Asian education is characterised by a large amount of contact time and a didactic approach, whereas UK education encourages reflection and

includes significantly less contact time. Whilst the educational rationale for this is not disputed by respondents, this reduced contact time can be perceived as poorer value for money.

Throughout the interviews, it appeared that the major grievances were concerned with academic issues, defined by Aldridge and Rowley (2001) as 'Satisfiers', the elements which truly define the student experience. This supports previous work in the US by Su and Bao (2001), who found that issues surrounding teaching, assessment and staff contact were most likely to result in complaints. The most serious non-academic issue that was raised concerned damage to student accommodation and an undeserved fine imposed on innocent students. This issue was taken to the highest level by the students involved, and provided further support to the view of Broadbridge and Marshall (1995), who felt that public complaining was largely instigated by financial issues. This dispute involved interaction with various non-academic members of staff, all of whom were placed in positions where their response could greatly affect the satisfaction of the student. Wright et al. (1996) stressed the importance of non-academic staff in ensuring student satisfaction, as although not directly involved in teaching delivery they are responsible for many of the support systems that shape the student experience.

Despite East-Asian students displaying a willingness to publicly complain in both the online survey and interviews, this is mediated by a common fear that such complaints may compromise the future grades of the

student. This relatively logical fear has not yet been addressed in the literature, but may act as possibly the single greatest barrier to obtaining negative student feedback. This fear may be particularly pronounced with smaller cohorts where students feel they will be easily recognised by academic staff, so it is up to the university to convince students that feedback will not affect their university grades.

When approaching university staff directly to address any problems, respondents commented that doing so via email was the best means of communicating the problem effectively, owing to the potential awkwardness of a face to face confrontation (Yau, 1988). Bearden and Teel (1980) noted the importance of self-confidence in the decision of whether to complain, and using email can alleviate this problem and essentially blur the lines between public and private complaining (Liu and McClure, 2001). Therefore, it would appear that any comprehensive model of student complaint behaviour would need to include email communication as a specific feedback channel. Conversely, more confident East-Asian students may prefer face to face contact, where they can use body language to convey their emotions more effectively. The decision of whether to complain via oral or written communication will no doubt be largely affected by the students' language ability (Cornwell, Bligh and Babakus, 1991). The importance of language is further underlined by respondents who commented that complaining about educational issues in their home countries would be significantly less problematic.

Student representation on university committees appears in theory to offer a solution to the awkward confrontations that may occur during student complaints. However respondents did not consider this system as a serious means of conveying their grievances with university staff. It may be that East-Asian students do not believe that their views are genuinely taken on board via such systems. Alternatively, East-Asian students may not be able to communicate their problems with English student representatives because of a general lack of cross-cultural interaction in the university. Dolinsky (1994) noted that consumers may lack a general knowledge of which channels they can use to make a complaint, something which certainly appears to be applicable to the HE sector.

Respondents commented on the importance of 'strength in numbers' when complaining about education in their home countries. Collecting a petition of student signatures provides weight to the complaint in question and the large numbers go some way to alleviate fears that individual grades may be adversely affected. Therefore it is not surprising to discover the prevalence of sharing experiences with fellow international students through word of mouth. As Etzel and Silverman (1981) noted, complaints about educational institutions are often made to fellow sufferers rather than individuals who could potentially solve the problem.

Dolinsky (1994) noted that if such word of mouth were to spread back to East-Asia this may seriously impede future recruitment efforts in that country. However, the current study has revealed that sharing problems

with friends and family back home is not seen as a suitable channel for East-Asian students. Whereas fellow students can offer empathy and potentially practical advice, confiding in family may only serve to cause anxiety for parents who are not in a position to help their children.

Universities may be pleased to learn that negative word of mouth may not necessarily reach potential students in East-Asia, but this does deprive East-Asian students of an important avenue to express their emotions, and as such more should be done to ensure suitable channels are available to dissatisfied students within the university.

8.6 Practical Recommendations for Universities with East-Asian Student Cohorts

As discussed in Chapter One, a key objective of the thesis was to utilise the findings to provide practical recommendations for universities with East-Asian student cohorts. The number of East-Asian students applying to UK universities has decreased marginally in recent years (UKCOSA, 2008), a trend which places even further emphasis on educational managers to understand and improve the international student experience. The following recommendations are made with the acknowledgement that budgets may limit the extent of their implementation, however it is argued here that the following measures would aid in East-Asian student retention.

Pre-arrival information and induction: To tackle East-Asian students' anxieties concerning everyday life in the UK, induction sessions should address the more practical elements of surviving in the UK. This could be further supported by university web pages providing support on issues such as setting up bank accounts and shopping locally, made available before their physical move to the UK. It may be that separate consumer workshops could be offered to international students upon arrival to make them aware of the amenities available and offer support to any students who find themselves in dispute with service providers.

Such pre-arrival information should also make students aware of the additional responsibilities they will encounter when living away from home, such as housework and paying bills. Providing such information will eliminate some of the unexpected elements of studying abroad.

Promote cross-cultural interaction: A possible reason that 37% of East-Asian respondents favoured a separation acculturation style is that they may be unaware of the potential benefits of forming cross-cultural friendship networks. These benefits include future travel and employment opportunities, greater exposure to alternative cultures and potentially higher academic achievement. Communicating these benefits may be particularly important for those East-Asian students who are studying in the UK largely because of the wishes of their parents.

However, the counter-argument is that more needs to be done to encourage UK students to show an equal willingness to interact with other cultures. Respondents in the current study suggested that UK students could do more to involve them both inside and outside class, and universities should make all students aware of the cultural diversity offered by international students (something which may be achieved through more study abroad activities). Although forcing students to interact with other cultures is clearly not a feasible solution, it may be that universities can incentivise cross-cultural interaction in, for example, group work activities.

In order to improve language skills and general cultural awareness, it would be especially beneficial for East-Asian students to share accommodation with UK students. Therefore all students should be asked if they would be prepared to share halls of residence with other nationalities. This policy would offer all students cross-cultural interaction without enforcing it on those who may lack the confidence to volunteer. However for such a scheme to be successful more would have to be done to promote the benefits of cross-cultural interaction to all students at the application stage.

Investigate prevalence of racial discrimination: Whilst prejudice towards international students may not occur on campus, the findings have uncovered incidents away from the university that may have a devastating effect on the international student experience. Research that addresses the attitudes of the local community towards different

nationalities would provide a more accurate picture of this, and it may be that universities need to work with local schools and the police to tackle this problem. Obviously any research would need to be conducted away from the public eye, as universities would not want word of such potential prejudice to reach the media.

Open approach to university fees: Assuming there is a rational reason behind the inflated tuition fees paid by East-Asian students, it is recommended that this information is shared with them upon arrival to prevent them becoming aware of this through interactions with UK students. Although this may result in negative reactions from students, universities could at this point underline the amount of academic and non-academic support that is made available to support their acculturation process.

Manage student expectations: It is crucial that East-Asian students know exactly what to expect from their study abroad experience, and universities should therefore clearly discuss issues such as reduced contact time and lecturer availability at the beginning of East-Asian students' sojourn, ideally at individual course level. Being upfront about such issues will reduce the need for students to discuss these matters in the form of negative word of mouth. In particular, the reasons behind independent study and the longer-term benefits of becoming an independent learner should be promoted to counter the view that less contact time represents poorer value for money.

Promote individual complaint channels: Rather than asking students to submit complaints to particular departments or service teams, the use of individual contacts will be far less intimidating for East-Asian students. For smaller cohorts, Programme Leaders would be the logical first point of contact, however larger cohorts may need additional outlets such as student counsellors. The findings have suggested that East-Asian students are hesitant to share negative experiences with their families, therefore universities need to provide an outlet to vent their frustrations. These complaint channels need to be clearly communicated with East-Asian students, both at initial induction but also at later key dates such as assessment periods, when feelings of dissatisfaction are most likely to occur (Hart, 2004).

Linked to the above, it is crucial that East-Asian students do not feel that making a formal or informal complaint will affect their future grades. Programme Leaders need to convince students that negative feedback is vital in improving the experience of both current and future student cohorts. It may be that some form of anonymous complaint channel (e.g. suggestion boxes) be offered for students who are hesitant to put their names to negative feedback, although this may not be feasible for more serious complaints where a greater level of detail is required. For example, anonymity may be preferred by students in particularly serious complaints such as sexual harassment, however this can make it problematic for the member of staff in question to respond (Guthrie-Morse, 1996).

Whilst complaint management is clearly a key element of the Programme Leader's role, it may be that other lecturers will at some point be faced with a student complaint. Such lecturers may lack the interpersonal skills or knowledge to handle these effectively, therefore some awareness training could ensure all staff are aware of the correct procedures. This may be particularly important for longer serving lecturers, who may not be convinced by recent arguments that students are to be treated as consumers with an input into the delivery of their course.

Accept existence of negative word of mouth: The online survey indicates that private complaining is a common response to dissatisfaction across all acculturation styles. It is generally accepted that such word of mouth is potentially damaging and should therefore be eliminated wherever possible. However, word of mouth is a fundamental element of collectivist culture (Yau, 1988; Liu and McClure, 2001) that may be crucial to East-Asian students' wider happiness and well-being. Therefore universities should accept that students will discuss bad experiences, but the damage this causes may only be minimal as it is unlikely to be shared with families or other potential future students back home.

Develop and publish an authoritative student complaints guide:

Whilst the research has shown those who are integrated as most likely to engage in public complaining, all East-Asian students may at some point wish to complain about an element of the university but lack the knowledge of how to do so. Possibly by working alongside bodies such as

Student Unions, a succinct and straightforward guide to submitting a complaint should be offered to all students upon enrolment. This could ideally illustrate the various channels in diagrammatic form and advise students as to the most appropriate channel depending on the nature of the complaint. Such a document would ensure that student complaints are made to those individuals in a position to handle them promptly and effectively.

Student representative system: East-Asian students appear unconvinced that this system can improve their student experience, and the lack of cross-cultural interaction that has already been discussed may make it difficult to pass on feedback through a UK student representative. To combat these attitudes, course leaders should provide concrete examples of how previous feedback has shaped the current course, and also ensure that at least one representative is an international student. This will mean that even those East-Asian students who can be described as separated will still have a representative they can comfortably approach to pass on their feedback.

8.7 Meeting of Objectives and Contribution

In Chapter One (specifically Table 2) a number of objectives were formulated to ensure the current study followed a structured research process. These objectives are reviewed below, including a brief commentary of particular challenges encountered throughout the process.

Initially, a thorough literature survey was conducted to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject areas and aid in the development of research questions (Objectives 1 and 2). Due to increased migration levels, acculturation is a topical area for both business and sociological researchers, which enabled a wide range of publications to be incorporated into the literature survey. In particular, the studies investigating acculturation in relation to consumer issues aided in the development of the online survey. Acquiring literature on CCB from the late 1990s to date was somewhat more challenging as many of the foremost studies were published around the early 1980s. Thankfully, more recent work has focused on specific areas that have been of particular value to this study, most notably studies on cross-cultural CCB and the emergence of online complaint behaviour.

The nature of the four research questions demanded the development of a mixed methods research design: whilst RQ1 searched for a quantitative relationship between acculturation and CCB, the remaining questions were more qualitative in nature. A detailed account of the decisions made throughout this process can be found in Chapter Five (Objective 3). In particular, the use of an existing acculturation scale was an important decision and consequently a rigorous process had to be undertaken to ensure a robust instrument was employed. Equally, development of the SCBS was professionally undertaken, involving a review of existing instruments using a similar approach and extensive piloting, not only with

potential respondents but also with authors of methodologically similar CCB studies.

Owing to the two contrasting data collection methods addressing distinct research questions, data analysis was presented in separate chapters, with links made between the two where appropriate (Objective 4).

Obtaining a reasonable number of responses to the online survey was a particular obstacle: despite the choice of language facility, obvious relevance to respondents and the user-friendly design multiple reminders had to be used to secure sufficient numbers. In terms of analysis, the development of the interview data matrix (Appendix J) was an important step in displaying such large quantities of data, and also enabled comparisons to be made between respondents.

This analysis allowed for a full discussion of the research questions in Sections 8.2 – 8.5. The findings of the study were discussed alongside the existing literature, however this was made slightly more difficult by the somewhat limited amount of work on student acculturation and student complaint behaviour. The findings indicate that more could be done for East-Asian students surrounding both their acculturation and complaint experiences, which led to the development of practical recommendations for universities, at which point the wider limitations of the study were also recognised (Objectives 5 and 6).

Overall, the current study appears to have met all of the objectives listed in Table 2, ensuring that the study has followed a rigorous and professional research process. Following such a structure has ensured that the thesis offers an original contribution that adds to the current knowledge base surrounding student acculturation and complaint behaviour, with particular focus on the experiences of East-Asian students. This contribution is discussed below with reference to the intended contribution outlined in Chapter One.

8.7.1 Original Contribution to Knowledge

Investigating the relationship between Acculturation and CCB: The online survey was the first attempt at understanding if an individual's acculturation style is relevant in his or her choice of complaint behaviours, therefore plugging a gap in the literature that was highlighted by Raven and Foxman (1994). Whilst it was hypothesised that certain acculturation styles would lead to particular complaint behaviours, results from this study have failed to support this view. It would appear that the choice of complaint behaviours in university scenarios does not differ depending on acculturation styles: all respondents showed a high willingness to engage in both private and public behaviours, although scores on public complaining may have been exaggerated because of the use of hypothetical scenarios.

It was surprising not to note a stronger link between integration and assimilation and public complaining: such individuals would presumably be more comfortable complaining in English and be able to ask the advice of UK based students. However the results are potentially good news for universities who can assume that all East-Asian students are prepared to voice their dissatisfaction, even if they have separated themselves from UK culture. It is possible however that acculturation styles are more strongly linked to the outcome of a submitted complaint: those with heightened language and social skills would surely be in a better position to secure a satisfactory resolution to their complaint.

East-Asian Student Acculturation: This study has added to the existing knowledge of the acculturation experiences of East-Asian students, and has done so by combining quantitative and qualitative methods, something that is rare in the acculturation field (Nwankwo and Lindridge, 1998). The EAAM survey provides a numerical breakdown of the acculturation styles adopted by respondents, and whilst the intention is not to generalise the findings to all East-Asian students across the UK, it is a positive sign for universities that 46% of respondents scored highest on the integration sub-scale, widely regarded as the most healthy form of acculturation (Ghaffarian, 2001). Such a numerical breakdown of UK-based East-Asian students is not evident in the current literature, and provides universities with a broad understanding of how such students typically adapt. The spread of results across the four acculturation styles also suggests that

Berry's (1980) framework is suitable for the study of East-Asian sojourners in the UK.

The qualitative element of the research furthered this knowledge with findings that could help universities provide more appropriate support services, which could in turn improve student retention. The study indicates that East-Asian students operate a 'survival' strategy and often struggle with the more functional elements of everyday life, including various consumer situations. In contrast to existing literature which emphasises the academic challenges faced by international students, the current study adds to the knowledge base by highlighting a general level of dissatisfaction regarding cross-cultural contact: East-Asian students' hopes of developing friendships with UK students are largely not realised and this may in part be a consequence of university procedures that limit opportunities for interaction (such as enrolling international students on specific courses or accommodation arrangements).

Student Complaint Behaviour: Only very few studies have specifically addressed CCB in a HE setting (for example, Su and Bao {2001} attempted to understand the most common responses to student dissatisfaction, however this was done in the US and did not focus specifically on international students), therefore this study has added significantly to developing an understanding of how East-Asian students voice their dissatisfaction. Results of the online survey show that East-Asian students are prepared to publicly complain, and this was especially

so when the issue involved an immediate financial cost and feelings of perceived injustice. Both quantitative and qualitative findings also stress the importance of word of mouth for dissatisfied East-Asian students, although this will not necessarily be shared with their family at home. To a certain extent universities should accept that as students develop informal support networks with course mates, they are inevitably going to share minor dissatisfactory experiences with fellow students. As long as students are aware of the public avenues they can follow if complaints are more serious, this word of mouth may not be as significant a problem as it would be for other organisations.

Another critical finding is that East-Asian students fear that complaints may compromise their grades. This may result in complaints being made anonymously, via other lecturing staff or not being made at all, meaning that the university loses out on valuable student feedback. Whilst this fear needs to be directly addressed, wider efforts need to be made to ensure culturally-appropriate means of providing feedback are available to international students. Knowledge such as the above, whilst adding to the general theoretical knowledge on CCB in more service-based scenarios, also has clear practical implications for university management (see Section 8.6).

The development of a preliminary model of Student Complaint Behaviour (Figure 13) offers an initial attempt at using existing models of CCB to produce a comprehensive list of student responses to dissatisfaction.

However, there are additional complaint channels available to students that were not included in the model (for example, the OIAHE), therefore this model requires further conceptual and empirical work before it can be classed as definitive.

Methodological Contribution: Adopting a mixed method approach (as opposed to a purely positivist approach which has dominated much previous work in both acculturation and CCB) has enabled the current study to answer various research questions. In particular, a range of issues that were highlighted in Section 6.6 were able to be investigated further through the semi-structured interviews, providing further support to the idea that using mixed methods sequentially can help to produce richer data (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989; Creswell, 2003).

The development of the SCBS, along with the reported evidence of reliability and construct validity, offers an easily adaptable and administered instrument to assess the potential complaint behaviours of all students. Whilst care must be taken when interpreting results due to its hypothetical nature, the current study has provided evidence that the vignette questioning technique can be used in more service-based industries to gather data that can then be explored further with more qualitative techniques. This can hopefully contribute to future studies into student complaint behaviour, and ideally include additional scenarios to tap the multi-faceted nature of the university experience.

8.8 Study Limitations and Areas for Future Research

Whilst the above discussion has highlighted the contribution made by the thesis to existing knowledge and its practical value to universities, it is also important to recognise the limitations of the study. An awareness of such limitations can guide both the researcher and others in terms of future research surrounding the East-Asian student experience.

Methodological Issues: As discussed in Chapter Five, the EAAM was developed for use with East-Asian students who had moved to study in the US as opposed to the UK. Consequently some minor linguistic changes were made to a number of items, which may potentially compromise the instrument (Schrauf and Navarro, 2005). However, a comparison of scores from the current study and when the scale was originally administered in the US by Barry (2001) shows no significant differences for individual items. In addition, evidence of both reliability and validity data was provided in Chapter Six, suggesting that the scale is appropriate for use with a UK based population. As will be discussed below, future research could administer the instrument to a wider population to gain a more representative picture of East-Asian student acculturation styles.

Future research utilising the EAAM could focus on seeking further verification of the scale's validity. For example, it may be that when responding to the items respondents have opted for answers that reflect their ideal as opposed to their actual acculturation style. This may result in

inflated numbers of respondents reporting an integration style, when in reality they have become separated or even marginalised. Whilst the semi-structured interviews conducted did not suggest that this was an issue in the current study, this raises an interesting question for developers of similar scales across the acculturation field.

As has been mentioned elsewhere, the hypothetical nature of the SCBS may well be responsible for respondents reporting a higher than expected propensity to complain publicly. A review of other studies using a similar method of studying CCB suggests that this has not occurred elsewhere: it may instead be that East-Asian students are highly involved in the university experience and are therefore likely to complain when dissatisfied. Indeed, data from the semi-structured interviews suggests that formal complaints have been made in the case of more serious problems. Nonetheless, if the SCBS is to be utilised in the future as a valid tool for understanding student complaint behaviours further evidence is required on this issue.

Potential language difficulties may have been a significant barrier for respondents throughout the semi-structured interviews. Respondents varied notably in their English speaking ability, and this may have resulted in certain experiences not being shared with the researcher. Although every effort was made to reassure respondents, it was not possible to offer respondents a choice of language as with the online survey. It would be interesting to note if using East-Asian researchers in such a study would

uncover a different set of acculturation and complaint experiences. As the current researcher has only a limited knowledge of East-Asian culture, this may have in some way impeded the discussion. From a methodological perspective, it would be of great value to discover if international students are more at ease participating in research with co-nationals. In addition, respondents who chose to complete the online survey in English may have encountered some difficulties when addressing the SCBS, where the vignettes were significantly longer than the statements used in the EAAM. This may have impeded their understanding of key issues within the vignettes, although hopefully the extensive piloting process ensured the vignettes were suitably written and structured.

Sampling: The current study was restricted to the East-Asian student population of one North-East UK university. Although this still provided a population of 2,350 students, the response rate for the online survey was disappointing and consequently the findings cannot be generalised across all East-Asian students in the UK. Ideally, the study could be replicated in the future (with the co-operation of other UK universities with sizeable East-Asian student cohorts) to gain a wider understanding of both East-Asian acculturation and complaint behaviours.

Whilst East-Asian students represent a significant proportion of the UK's international student body, the acculturation of non East-Asian students is also a pertinent issue for universities (there are approximately 250,000 international students in the UK from regions other than East-Asia:

UKCOSA, 2008). Although the EAAM could not be utilised with all international students due to its focus on East-Asian sojourners (Barry, 2001), it may be that a more culture-general acculturation scale (Kim et al., 2002) could be used across all international students. Despite the problems associated with such general instruments, they will help universities gain a wider understanding of the international student experience and highlight any specific nationalities that particularly struggle with the acculturation process.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the decision was made not to compare the complaint behaviours of East-Asian students with their UK counterparts in order to allow for the study to focus entirely on the international student population. However it is accepted that data on UK students' attitudes towards complaining may have added significantly to this study. Utilising previous research into CCB it was assumed that East-Asian and UK students would differ markedly in their complaint behaviours. However, data from the SCBS suggests a willingness to publicly complaining from East-Asians, which may mean these assumed differences are less prevalent in an educational context. Therefore it is crucial for future research to explicitly compare the complaint behaviours of various cultural groups within a university environment as this will enable university managers to develop culturally sensitive complaint handling systems with greater confidence.

The current study was concerned with the experiences of East-Asian students, who in the majority of cases view their studies as a temporary sojourn. Consequently, the research did not consider the acculturation or complaint behaviours of permanent East-Asian immigrants in the UK. Such permanent immigrants may have differing acculturation experiences and attitudes towards complaining in the UK. The vast majority of research that has previously linked acculturation to consumer behaviour (discussed in Chapter Two) has been conducted with permanent immigrants as opposed to sojourners, therefore the current research should be adapted to target East-Asians who have settled in the UK. This would obviously involve making significant changes to the methodology, including developing a complaint behaviours survey that is tailored to more general purchase situations than the SCBS.

Student Acculturation: Results from the EAAM indicated that 46% of respondents were either separated or marginalised, meaning they are not experiencing the benefits of integration with the host population, viewed as the optimum means of adapting to an unfamiliar culture (Berry, 1980; Ghaffarian, 2001; Butcher and McGrath, 2004). However, the research does not uncover why respondents have adopted these acculturation styles: East-Asian students may prefer to make friends only with co-nationals because of the temporary nature of their stay, or may only have separated themselves because of a failure to integrate with UK students. Consequently, further research could potentially investigate whether East-Asian students consciously adopt a particular acculturation style.

There certainly appears to be a need to investigate the attitudes of UK students towards their East-Asian counterparts. Respondents suggested that it was difficult to form close relationships with UK students as they preferred to keep international students at 'arms length'. This viewpoint suggests that host culture acceptance is significant in the acculturation process and provides support for Bourhis et al.'s (1997) Interactive Acculturation Model (discussed in Chapter 2). Such research may reveal particular barriers to cross-cultural integration not uncovered by purely researching East-Asian students.

The EAAM was employed to understand the acculturation styles adopted by East-Asian students. However, as suggested by Greenland and Brown (2005) acculturation is a dynamic phenomenon, therefore the cross-sectional approach used in the current study does not appreciate that an individual's acculturation style may change over time (for example, an early attempt to integrate may in time become more akin to either assimilation or conversely separation). Future studies adopting a more longitudinal approach would help universities to understand the acculturation process throughout a student's sojourn, and this could be done by either administering an instrument such as the EAAM at regular intervals, or possibly through more qualitative techniques.

Complaining in an Unfamiliar Culture: Further research is needed to validate the work of Blodgett, Hill and Bakir (2006), who argued that the prevailing shopping systems of a nation account for significant variance in

CCB. The current study has discovered that East-Asian students are in general impressed with return policies offered in the UK, but the research did not conclusively address whether this was a big factor in how they reacted to dissatisfactory experiences.

The current study suggests that although East-Asian students are proactive in registering their dissatisfaction publicly, they are often unsuccessful in gaining redress (be that a financial payment, apology etc.). In the cases discussed in the semi-structured interviews, this may have been caused by a cynical approach towards non UK customers by some companies, whereas in other cases it may be down to reasons such as a lack of confidence or language ability. This is clearly an important issue for marketers as unsuccessful complaints are likely to lead to other forms of CCB, in particular negative word of mouth.

Further research could focus on the actual complaint experiences of non UK based customers and attempt to discover the crucial factors in whether the complaint was successfully resolved. Such knowledge would be of benefit both for non UK customers with a lack of knowledge on how to complain effectively, and also for organisations serving an increasingly diverse customer base. The current study suggests that East-Asian students perceive a level of suspicion from UK companies when returning items: this implies an almost discriminatory approach towards migrant customers which undoubtedly requires further investigation.

Student Complaints: If not satisfactorily handled, complaints may naturally lead to a student withdrawing from the university (Dolinsky, 1994). However, a major limitation of the current study is that it did not include students who have withdrawn from the university. Such students may or may not have withdrawn owing to dissatisfaction with their educational experience, but the views of these students may be particularly important in understanding more serious cases of student dissatisfaction. Similarly, the views of withdrawn East-Asian students may be equally crucial to an understanding of student acculturation: it may be that East-Asian students leave the university because of wider cultural adaptation problems. Despite the potential problems of reaching such students, future research into both acculturation and student complaint behaviour would ideally seek to incorporate the views of students who did not complete their programme of study.

Further research is also needed in order to investigate if there are particular student characteristics that may increase his or her propensity to complain publicly. For example, Burke's (2004) 'High Maintenance Student' theory suggests that complaints are most likely to come from high achieving students, although no empirical evidence was provided in support of this view. Given that the current study has uncovered that East-Asian students fear that complaints may affect their university grades, this offers a particularly interesting area for future research. A range of other triggers to dissatisfaction (Boote, 1998) were discussed in Chapter Three (including demographics, personality and situational factors) and could

also be investigated in a HE context to build an accurate picture of a 'typical' student complainer.

Although the OIAHE was not included in the model of student complaint behaviour used in the current study, the increasing use of this third party by dissatisfied students makes it an important area for future research (a 44% increase in eligible complaints was recorded in 2006 – www.bbc.co.uk, 2007). Again this may provide insight into more serious cases of student dissatisfaction, although issues surrounding confidentiality may make this information more difficult to access. Such research may also be a potential means of researching students who have actually withdrawn from a university owing to a particular dissatisfactory experience.

Northumbria University Students' Union recently opened a new 'Advice and Representation Centre', a service specifically set up to provide advice to students who wish to submit a formal complaint to the university. Although this scheme is still in its infancy, the early signs are that it has proved popular with a diverse range of students. Research into these cases would provide rich data with specific emphasis on public complaints that are submitted with the help of a third party (in this case the Student Union essentially acts as an industry regulator). Issues surrounding student confidentiality would again be an issue, but university managers would be particularly interested to know not only the range of issues that are discussed but also what advice is being given to students.

For those students who are willing to voice their dissatisfaction publicly, future research could investigate further the complaint channels preferred when interacting with university staff. The current study has considered the contrasting methods of face to face versus email communication, however dissatisfied consumers may also wish to register complaints via post or telephone (Mattila and Wirtz, 2004). This is a complex area and may be related to issues such as power distance, self-confidence and individual attitudes towards making a complaint.

In summary, the above section has highlighted a number of limitations, alongside a discussion of how these were negotiated and the opportunities these provide for future research. It is felt that the areas of both acculturation and CCB will remain to be critical issues for both permanent immigrants and international students of all cultures, and as such warrant the further attention of both marketing and education researchers. As well as having an obvious theoretical contribution, such research would be of great practical value to acculturating individuals, university management and other organisations serving these groups.

8.9 Chapter Summary

The above chapter has provided a review of the key findings of the current study, addressing each of the four research questions in turn and relating the findings back to existing theory on both acculturation and CCB. Given

the pragmatic nature of the study, it was felt that the findings could be of practical value for universities with East-Asian student cohorts: therefore a number of recommendations were made, including offering more practical induction programs, promoting cross-cultural interaction and offering individual points of contact for dissatisfied students.

The chapter also reviewed the original contribution to knowledge made by the thesis, which can be summarised as:

- Addressing the gap in the literature by investigating if acculturation styles are related to complaint behaviours;
- Adding to the knowledge base surrounding the acculturation experiences of East-Asian students in the UK;
- Offering an understanding of how East-Asian students react to dissatisfactory incidents and their wider attitudes towards complaining in a HE scenario;
- Adopting a mixed method approach and developing an instrument that could be utilised in future studies of student complaint behaviour.

The chapter closed by highlighting the limitations of the study and outlining the various opportunities for future research in both acculturation and CCB. It is hoped that the current study will inspire other researchers to further the current knowledge base by using innovative methodologies to truly understand the experiences of East-Asians studying in the UK.

Appendices

Appendix A: Focus Group Moderators Outline

Wednesday May 17th, 2006

Objective:

- To aid in the development of the student acculturation scale (SAS) and Student Complaint Behaviours Survey (SCBS) by generating potential items and highlighting potentially problematic concepts.

Aims:

- To identify what participants see as the biggest determinants of acculturation;
- To gain an idea of how they view their own acculturation experiences (do they actively seek to integrate into UK culture, and do UK people aid in this process?);
- To gain an initial insight into their views on complaining and what actions they perceive as complaining;
- To discover what sorts of dissatisfactory incidents they have experienced in their time at university and how they have reacted to these.
- To provide the researcher some first-hand contact with the target population and appreciate their general attitudes towards the concepts under discussion.

Mechanics:

- 4-6 participants;
- Recruited via the International Student Advisor contacts database;
- Students from various Asian countries, including Vietnam and Malaysia studying a variety of courses;
- Relatively structured format – approximately 10 questions over a 45 minute period;
- Moderator involvement will be limited wherever possible – direct conversation and encourage input from all participants

Introduction:

- Many thanks for agreeing to take part in the research – refreshments!
- Reiterate aims of the focus group
- Mechanics: Informal atmosphere, interaction encouraged, my involvement, length and approximate number of questions
- Ethical issues & consent – talk through the conditions on page two

Please bear in mind that I am not discussing these issues as a teacher / lecturer, but as an impartial researcher who is keen to learn. There are no right or wrong answers, and nothing you say will be passed on to other members of staff outside my research team. At any point if you wish to end your participation in the focus group you are free to leave – also if there is one particular question you are not willing to answer please make this known to me. The questions are not designed to be intrusive so hopefully no problems will occur.

Please note that at points I may write down additional observations, which may be connected to things such as your body language and intonation of your voice. This doesn't mean what you are saying is right or wrong, merely something interesting that adds to the data from the tape recording. You can get a transcript of this interview two weeks from today by emailing me – I will be happy to get your further opinion on what is discussed today.

Ice Breaker:

- Why did you choose to study in the UK?

Questions / Discussion Topics:

Acculturation:

- **What do you see as the biggest changes you have to make when coming to study in the UK?**
- How difficult have you found it to make these changes?
- Do you find it difficult to hold on to traits of your original culture? Which ones?
- **What are the biggest differences between studying in your home country and here in the UK?**
- Do you feel that people (staff and students) in the UK have helped you to integrate into the UK?
- Did you experience any 'culture shock' when first arriving in the UK?

Complaint Behaviours:

- **Do you feel that attitudes to complaining are different in your home country than to the UK? How?**
- Have you had any dissatisfying experiences in your time at this university?
- What options do you feel you have when such dissatisfying experiences occur?
- What would you expect to happen if you make a complaint to a lecturer / other university member of staff?

Close:

- Many thanks for your time
- Please feel free to take a biscuit / cake away with you
- Reiterate how the focus group will be used – offer opportunity to see manuscript in future

Appendix B: Focus Group Transcription

Wednesday 17th May 2006, 14:00

Northumberland Building, Room 442

Moderator: David Hart

Participants: Respondents A, B and C

Key:

DH	David Hart
RA	Respondent A
RB	Respondent B
RC	Respondent C

DH: First of all, sincerest thanks for coming along today, it means a great deal to my research. First of all let me introduce myself, my name is David Hart, and my role within the Business School is Graduate Tutor, a role which partially involves teaching whilst at the same time completing my PhD. My research is focused on international students, and in particular how, if dissatisfied with any aspect of the university experience, they go about complaining should they choose to do so, and all the issues that surround that decision. Please bear in mind that you are not talking to me as a member of NBS staff but as a researcher – anything you say today will not go beyond me and my supervisory team

The focus group is concerned with the design of my future methodology, and any opinions I draw from today will go towards the development of a questionnaire which will be distributed to higher numbers during the next academic year.

I am now passing out the NBS official informed consent form – it provides all of my contact details for your information, and the second page outlines your rights in participating in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to leave at any time for whatever reason. Within two weeks of today a transcript of this focus group will be available by emailing me. You have been given two forms – one is for you to retain for your records, whereas the other is for me to retain.

I'd just like to say a few more things before we start– I would like a nice, informal atmosphere for the next 45 minutes – it can be difficult to be open when you are being recorded – try and pretend it's not there. Please feel free to talk to each other as well me and to interact. At some point I may make additional notes – this just means I am making further observations that may add to the recording. Also please remember that I am not here as a member of staff – what you say will not be used for any reasons other than this research. Are we OK to get started?

First of all, why did you choose to study in the UK?

#Pause approximately 4 seconds#

RB: In my country UK education is renowned for quality. One of my cousins was staying here so I contacted him and he said life here is very good and you would be learning very much. Because at home we stay with our parents, basically all our life, so it's to get one year of exposure, international exposure. And in the UK the percentage of international students is very high and the life is very good here.

RC: basically a UK degree is much shorter than an American degree which may involve a diploma and a masters as well. To be honest the main reason I am here is that there are too many Asians in Australia including relatives, so I wanted to do something different.

RB: My institute offered me chance to go to the UK for one year, meaning you will be getting a degree of home as well as UK.

DH: When first came to UK, what did you see as the biggest changes you had to make to adapt to life in the UK?

RB: Like being yourself?

DH: Anything – any changes you had to make.

RC: Well definitely the climate – obviously in Malaysia it is summer all year long, like 32 degrees Celsius. Other than that I think Malaysians are considered quite adaptable because we are quite multi-racial, so it wasn't really that hard for me in terms of culture.

RB: In our country there is cheap labour so we have servants at home, they or my parents cooked my meals. When I came here I have to do all the work by myself, cleaning clothes, getting a glass of water - I have to do it.

RA: It's more like being able to be independent, and having the chance to experience something which is different from your own culture.

DH: Have you encountered any language problems since you came here?

RB: I am not able to understand much of broad Geordie – I went to London and I had no problem understanding that, just Geordie is a bit difficult.

RA: The accent from different counties is different, but I think I didn't have much problems with the language communication thing because basically English is a universal language and I speak English in my home country.

DH: You all had some experience of speaking English in your home country?

#All round agreement#

RB: The education at home is in English....

RA: just the accent is a bit different.

DH: You are generally here for long periods of time away from your home culture – do you feel you have lost contact with life at home?

RB: After coming here I learnt the true value of my relations, how much I miss them and how much value they have for me. I have contact with my close friends and relatives. At home we are very close, so they call me or I call them, but the friends elsewhere I have lost contact with them. We used to meet within a week and hang around but I can't call them a lot.

RC: I guess in terms of culture, food is something – I am really missing home food right now.

#Laughter#

RC: To be honest in Malaysia we are kind of a little bit Westernised, I just don't feel I have lost it that much.

RB: We can get everything we need for food, as in my country we eat Chinese, Thai etc.

RC: But does it taste the same?

RB: What we are missing is that taste, it's not like at home.

DH: More focused on university, what are the biggest differences you have found between studying in your home country and studying here in the UK?

RC: Very, very big difference, it's huge really. When you compare back at home I guess were more spoon-fed in that sense, we are provided with really thick notes, what books to read, how to answer questions, with structure, but here it's like they couldn't care less like if you die, if you don't come or whatever, and you know it's all about self learning which is quite hard.

RA: Mine is kind of the same – I was introduced to the English system when I was at college so when I was transferred here I didn't find it hard to adjust because it was introduced to me at home.

RB: At home we have very much interactive classes – the lecturers ask us questions. Here they don't mind if your phone rings or if someone is talking, but at home they will not allow it. The full attention must be to the lecturer, and they make it interactive and they welcome questions, but

here during the lecture they don't like that or welcome it. They want the lecture to go smooth. Also, in my country it's a bit spoon feeding to us.

DH: People often write about different the ways of learning in Eastern and Western cultures. Is it hard to deal with?

RB: If I have a question I just ask, sometimes the lecturer answers it there and then or sometimes they say see me after the class. Sometime they ignored me.

DH: To put you on the spot, which education system do you prefer – your home country or in the UK?

RA: I guess I found the UK system is a bit better than the American one in terms of the different ways that they teach and assess the work. In the UK we have dissertation, but in the US it's a thesis, its slightly different style.

RB: I prefer UK – it's better for your self development. Very very good and practical and the student has to research a lot and do his own work, we don't have that many dissertations at home, we only have exams.

RC: Definitely back at home, definitely, it's just so hard here because the classes are too huge and the lecturer is not motivational in that sense because the lecturers couldn't care less if you come or whatever, so it's really hard in that sense, so I definitely prefer that at home.

RB: At home we have, you know, attendance system, the teachers take attendance, and if our attendance is less than 85% we are not allowed to take one paper, you know. So we have to make sure our attendance is more than 85%.

DH: So your previous experience makes it easier to attend all of the time?

All: Yeah.

RB: At home they don't allow anyone to come in late. Here if you are 25 minutes late they are like 'please have a seat'. If you are coming late at home you stay outside and miss your lecture and you won't be getting any attendance.

RC: I would have to disagree because it depends on the lecturer as well. Like the lecturer I got was really straight, if it is past a certain time he would chase you out....

RB: But what I experience is that they allow you to come in.

DH: Do you think that staff and UK students have welcomed you into the culture, have you had a lot of contact with UK people whilst you have been here?

#Pause approximately 3 seconds#

RC: no, not at all.

RB: They welcomed us very well and they treated us as international students, they helped us with language problems a lot. They listened to what I was saying. And actually they have loads of Asians in Newcastle and they helped me a lot.

RC: Definitely not. I mean the only English people I speak to are my flatmates, but other than that I don't feel the university has done anything to welcome us because I am a final year student. Instead they target freshers for first year students. It's hard for us because when we first arrived we didn't know anyone, it was pretty hard, none of the student unions did anything, I think they should. We are paying like three times the amount.

RB: I have experienced the good persons in the undergraduate office, the lady explained everything I needed, where to get registered, and that was a job of meet and greet, but I missed that so she explained it very well. She wrote down everything I had to do, go to library and get a card then go to the union.

DH: Ideally, would you like more contact with UK students, did you think there would be more?

RB: I think there should be more.

RC: I think from my perspective in terms of the services the university provides, it's basically very standard with other universities in terms of how they treat international students. In terms of interaction with local community, I think I have to agree with her in the sense that there isn't to be a very good interaction with local community, especially as the programme is meant for international students (IBM). We are put in a class which is all international students and there isn't a substantial mix of locals or other European students which is balanced with the Asians. The program is meant mostly for other international students.

RC: Especially people from the UK. 99% percent of them are from the EU and Asia, none of UK, it was shocking.

RB: If you are a September intake (we are January intake) the difference is that in September the intake is very large and in January it is very small and in September it as a whole mix of culture – Europe, Asia, America, every part of the world. In January most of them are, 75% Asian community, 25% French, nothing else.

RC: 75% of Asians?

RB: 75% of Asians.

RA: It's like they sort of separate international ones (students) from the local ones, and they use different programs to do that.

DH: Right, those questions were geared towards the culture and issues you have faced when moving here, but now we are going to move towards complaining behaviour. Do you feel that people in your home countries treat complaints differently than do people in the west?

RC: Definitely. No offence to you, but I think that in terms of complaints I find in Britain they seem to turn a deaf ear when you complain. This situation, a friend of mine, she paid up for her accommodation, and they sent her three times the same invoice, and three times she went and told them she had paid. And they turned a deaf ear you know and there was just no coordination between the finance and the accommodation services. It was really annoying and like a waste of time, and they just don't care how much they complain.

RA: I think I definitely agree with the coordination part. Especially in a previous experience, there seems to be a coordination problem, my option module was not in the NBS, it's in the Arts and Social Sciences, so I guess my classes were on and off sometimes it was running sometimes not, sometimes many students, sometimes totally none. The coordination between the programme leader and the teacher is not very good. The class itself is not well organised. It definitely effects your progression on your education and because you are paying for the classes.

DH: Apart from accommodation and course organisation, have you had any other dissatisfying experiences in any aspect of the university?

RC: It's gonna take the whole night to be honest! In terms of teaching, I think the lecturers, some are helpful, others are really blunt, and what else? I had lots in mind but have forgotten.

RB: If you talk about teachers I have had good experiences with all of them. If I approach them they help me a lot, they told me what to do, what not to do, but I am missing having a very good social circle. At home it was good but here it is not so much. International students make their groups, Chinese make their own group, Indians make their own group, I don't like that, I love to be with all of them.

RC: Yeah, I know what you mean, yeah.

RB: People sit together, they won't be talking to anyone else.

RA: Especially the English

#Laughter#

RB: I used to take part in loads of cultural events and functions, but here I don't get that much chance of doing anything like that. One of my friends, he's Asian and he is on the ISOC community.

RC: Oh yeah, did you join ISOC?

RB: Yeah, and he was in that community he used to tell me this function is going on, if you want to participate.

DH: **University is also about the services it provides, such as the library and the students union. Have you had any experiences with these?**

RB: The union says 'oh, this event and that is going on'. If you have a friend you can go with the friend and enjoy, if you go alone you won't be able to enjoy because they all have their own groups. Here people love to go drinking, at home we are not that fond of drinking, at home we love to party, but here they are very busy drinking.

RC: And there's too many strikes I think, it really bothers me in that sense.

DH: **When were dissatisfied / unhappy with a product or service, we tend to have certain options, such as do nothing, complain to friends, or we can go to the people who have made us unhappy, and get them to solve it. Do you feel that people in the UK are more likely to follow one behaviour, compared to people from your home country?**

RA: I guess in terms of the complaining, it doesn't matter how much you complain. Sometimes with the staff in the undergraduate office, if you complain four or five times on the same issue, let's say Blackboard, they seem to get really bothered by that.

RC: Mmmm (agreement)

RA: They tend to ignore you or pass you on to another colleague.

DH: **When you are unhappy do you talk to your friends about things that have gone wrong?**

RC: Definitely, definitely. Yeah we just sit and bitch about it (can I say that?) and full stop. But there was one time I actually wrote a letter and yeah they did reply but nothing happened. It was just courtesy, it was quite disappointing for me.

DH: **In that situation was speaking to your friends more effective for you than actually writing the letter? Does it help?**

RC: Yeah, definitely, just let it out.

RB: I do not sit at home and talk about it, I just go to them and make them do my thing, I just go again and again. I was having a problem with Blackboard. I said I have this problem, and they say come back after a week, so I said no I've not got that much time, I want this to be done. I make sure it is done. Yesterday also I was having a problem so I went to the undergraduate office, they said we will mail you, I said no I have papers next week to do and they said you can go to your supervisor. So I went to him and explained my problem. He told me to share Blackboard from a friend. But why would they want to when they have their own mail and things? I give him my USB and he gave me the files.

DH: You have all taken responses to dissatisfaction that require a real legitimate effort, like talking to the undergraduate office or writing a letter, are those sorts of responses common in your home countries?

RC: No. I mean usually we avoid it because we don't want to get into trouble. Like if you were gonna complain about a lecturer and you haven't got your grades yet, I mean think twice about it! Seriously, you know, probably maybe after you get them, but I think it's not really in our culture to complain.

DH: So is it just tolerance, and put up with it?

RC: Yeah its tolerance, especially academic wise. Probably in customer service, in a supermarket, probably that's a different thing. It depends.

DH: It must depend on your personality as well?

#All round agreement#

JT: It all depends on the nature of the problem, sometimes I say the priority of that thing is not too much so it's not a problem, if they annoy me a lot then I will go and complain. In my country it depends upon the situation, sometimes if I want something to be done that is compulsory for me I make sure they do that, in my country they don't listen that much so we don't bother to complain that much.

DH: When you do make the effort to complain, what do you want the company to do about it, ideally?

RB: Listen to us....

RA: solve it....

RB: Solve....

RA: or if they couldn't solve they could do a compromise solution, anything....

RB: a reply....

RA: anything, something, just do something.

DH: Does financial compensation help? This is a common strategy in the UK.

RC: That's like buying people off! They could but I think the better way would be to show that they have taken the initiative to action and response sort of thing.

DH: Some people like to know that what has happened to them won't happen to anything else....

#All round agreement#

DH: That concludes the questions. That has been hugely useful for taking the time especially when you are so busy. Any concerns you have, or if you would like to add anything else please get in touch.

RB: Something comes to mind, if you are eating in a McDonalds, if there is a delay, if they give some discounts or vouchers, or serve you free, that is a good compromise you can say, if the customer is angry to make him come back to that place again and again. Giving a gift is a good thing, if you see it from the business perspective.

RC: It's all about marketing isn't it?

RB: It's all about marketing.

Appendix C: Acculturation Scales Matrix

Author(s)	Year	Topic	Scale Name	Uni / Multi Dimensional	Total Items	Language Usage	Language Ability	Social Relationships	Demographics	Identification
Jun, Ball & Gentry	1993	Consumer Acculturation		Uni	7	1				4
Ogden	2005	Hispanic Gender Roles in purchasing situations	Valencia's 'Hispanicness' scale	Uni	6	1	2		2	1
Questaer & Chong	2001	Australian-Chinese Consumers		Uni	15	1	5	1	5	1
Franco	1982	Mexican – American Children's Acculturation	Children's Acculturation Scale (CAS)	Uni	10	1	2	1	4	1
Rajagopalan & Hertmeier	2005	Indian levels of Consumer Involvement	Behavioural Acculturation Scale (by Szapocnik et al)	Uni	20	5		1		
Deyo et al	2005	Language based Acculturation Scale		Uni	4	4				
O'Guinn & Meyer	1986	Acculturation, advertising and sub-culture		Bi	20 (inc demo)	7			11	
Rissel	1997	Scale Development		Uni	8	5	2			1

Author(s)	Food	Media	Cultural involvement	Misc.	Culture General / Specific	Likert Scale	Scoring System	Strengths	Weaknesses
Jun, Ball & Gentry		2			Specific (Korean – American)	7 point	Tally up and average for each construct?	Succinct Uses key indicators. 0.73 Cronbach Alpha	Uni-dimensional Only language and media tapped
Ogden					Specific (Hispanics – American)	Vary from 3-5 by item	Score from 6 to 23; 6 low acc, 23 high.	Balanced across dimensions Taps language ability and usage Utilised by other researchers	Uni-dimensional Didn't use traditional item generation procedures
Queser & Chong		2			Specific (Australian – Chinese)	Unknown	Unknown	Derived from other researchers Varied dimensions Good length	Uni-dimensional Weighted towards b & d
Franco		1			Specific (Mexican – American)	5 point	Simple High - Low totals	Novel, completed by teachers Variety of constructs	Uni-dimensional Is self-reporting critical?
Rajagopalan & Hertmeyer		7	7		Specific (Indian – American)	5 point	Simple High – Low totals	Uses media Correlation Coefficient 0.97 Designed for 1 st generation Easily adapted	Uni-dimensional Language usage, not ability
Deyo et al					Specific (Mexican – American)	Varies from 3 to 5 point scale	Simple tally	Simple	Uni-dimensional Overly simplistic
O'Guinn & Meyer			2		Specific (Hispanics) but adaptable	Unknown	Unknown		Heavily weighted towards a & d
Rissel					General	5 point	Simple High-Low totals	Simple Adaptable Taps language	Lacks other dimensions

Author(s)	Year	Topic	Scale Name	Uni / Multi- Dimensional	Total Items	Language Usage	Language Ability	Social Relationships	Demographic	Identification
Pons et al	2001	Acculturation and sporting events		Uni	10					
Kim, Laroche & Tomiuk	2004	Chinese – Canadian gender roles		Uni	11	4		5		
Ward & Kennedy	1994	Acculturation	The Acculturation Index	Bi	21 (x2)	2	1		3	4
Kim, Laroche & Tomiuk	2001	Acculturation Measurement		Uni	21 (+ 9 eth ID)	6		5		4
Suinn et al	1992	Acculturation Measurement	The Suinn-Lew Asian Self Identity Acculturation Scale (SL ASIA)	Uni	21 (bi 25, all four e)	3	1	4	2	5
Benet-Martinez			Benet-Martinez Acculturation Scale	Bi	39	10		4		2
Kosic	2002	Acculturation Attitudes		Bi	26	1	1	10		6

Author(s)	Food	Media	Cultural Involve ment	Misc	Culture General/ Specific	Likert Scale	Scoring System	Strengths	Weaknesses
Pons et al		4	6		Specific (Italian – Canadians)				
Kim, Laroche & Tomiuk		2			Specific (Chinese – Canadian)	7 point	Simple High – Low totals	Simple 7 point scale	Uni-dimensional Lacks various dimensions
Ward & Kennedy	1		10		General	7 point	Scores for each dimension / culture	Bi-dimensional Variety of constructs 7 point Easily adaptable	Too lengthy?
Kim, Laroche & Tomiuk		4			Specific (Canadian – Italian)	9 point	Simple High – Low totals	Varied dimensions 9 point scale	Uni-dimensional
Suinn et al	2	2	2		General	Mainly 5 point	Tally and average – 1.00 = low, 3.00 = bicultural, 5.00 = high	Good variety of dimensions Widely cited Access OK Uni and Bi-dimensional Adaptable Cronbach Alpha 0.91 and validity supported by correlates with various demographic factors	Mainly uni- dimensional Lengthy?
Benet- Martinez		4	8	11	Specific, but adaptable	Mainly 6 point, varies by question	Unknown	Varied dimensions Adaptable Detailed	Inconsistent scoring Lengthy
Kosic	2	5	3		Specific (Croatsians – Italians)	5 point	Unknown	Varied, bi dimensional Reasonable length	European based Mid-point, potential difficulties Limited language items

Author(s)	Year	Topic	Scale Name	Uni-/Multi-Dimensional	Total Items	Language Usage	Language Ability	Social Relationships	Demographics	Identification
Nguyen, Messe & Stollak	1999	Acculturation and Adjustment	The Acculturation Scale for Vietnamese Adolescents	Bi	76 (shorter version 50)					6
Cuellar, Arnold & Maldonado	1995	Acculturation in Hispanics	ARSM II	Bi	29	4	5	8		14
Tsia			General Ethnicity Questionnaire (GEQ)	Bi	77	20	9	12	2	
Marin, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal & Perez-Stable	1987	Acculturation Measurement		Uni	12	8		4		
Barry	2001	Acculturation Measurement	East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM)	Quasi	29	4	3	14		7

Author(s)	Food	Media	Cultural involvement	Misc.	Culture General / Specific	Likert Scale	Scoring System	Strengths	Weaknesses
	1	5			Specific (Vietnamese – American)	5 point		Target Adolescents (mean age of study 15) Bi-dimensional	Lengthy
Nguyen, Messe & Stollak					Specific (Mexican – American)	5 point		Varied items Presumable Bi-dimensional Well cited Adaptable Feasible length	Lack of scoring information Hispanic basis
Cuellar, Arnold & Maldonado	4	4	12		Specific (Chinese – American)	5 point		Varied items Bi-dimensional Easily adaptable Symmetrical sub-scales	Lengthy Loaded towards a
Tsia					Specific (Spanish – English)	5 point		Simple 0.92 reliability (Marin et al, 1987)	Only utilises language and social relationships Uni dimensional Too short
Marin, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal & Perez-Stable									
Barry		1			General	7 point	Average scores across each acculturation strategy	Quasi dimensional Varied dimensions 7 point East Asian specific	Mid-point issues Uneven items per dimension Overloaded on c

Appendix D: Adapted East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM)

This section will focus on the way you have adapted to life in the UK. Please find below a list of statements. For each statement, click the appropriate box (numbered 1-7) to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement from the below scale:

1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Somewhat Disagree
4	Don't Agree or Disagree
5	Somewhat Agree
6	Agree
7	Strongly Agree



I write better in English than in my native language
Most of the music I listen to is Asian
I tell jokes both in English and in my native language
Generally, I find it difficult to socialize with anybody, Asian or English
When I am in my apartment/house, I typically speak English
My closest friends are Asian
I think as well in English as I do in my native language
I sometimes feel that neither English people nor Asians like me
If I were asked to write poetry, I would prefer to write it in English
I prefer going to social gatherings where most of the people are Asian
I have both English and Asian friends
There are times when I think no one understands me
I get along better with English people than Asians
I feel that Asians treat me as an equal more so than the English do
I feel that both Asians and English people value me
I sometimes find it hard to communicate with people
I feel that English people understand me better than Asians do

I would prefer to go out on a date with an Asian than with an English person

I feel very comfortable around both the English and Asians

I sometimes find it hard to make friends

I find it easier to communicate my feelings to English people than to Asians

I feel more relaxed when I am with an Asian than when I am with an English person

Sometimes I feel that Asians and English people do not accept me

I feel more comfortable socializing with English people than I do with Asians

Asians should not date non-Asians

Sometimes I find it hard to trust both English people and Asians

Most of my friends at work/university are English

I find that both Asians and English people often have difficulty understanding me

I find that I do not feel comfortable when I am with other people

N.B. Tick boxes were provided for each of the above items on the online survey.

Appendix E: Student Complaint Behaviours Survey (SCBS)

This section of the questionnaire is used to assess your likely complaint behaviours in a series of university situations. Even though these are not real, please imagine you are in these situations and answer them as honestly as you can.

General:

In general, please indicate how likely you are to take each of the below actions should you be dissatisfied with any aspect of the university experience.

(1 being very likely, 6 being very unlikely, 7 being don't know – Please tick the relevant box)

Speak to a member of academic staff (lecturers or tutors)

Speak to a member of non-academic staff
(office or support staff)

Speak to a member of student services

Speak to fellow students

Speak to family / other close friends

Consider leaving the university

Speak to a third party (e.g. Students' Union)

Send an email to the relevant member of staff
(academic or non-academic)

Hold more negative attitude towards the university

Do nothing

(The below scenarios also led to responses on the above scale)

Scenario 1:

You go to collect a mark and feedback for a recently completed assignment, and your feedback form shows a far lower mark than you expected. Also, the feedback lacks detail and is poorly presented, giving no indication of why you received such a low mark. You are faced with having to resit the module, however you are convinced your assignment was of a higher standard.

Scenario 2:

You have recently started a module that is due to include 10 lectures and 5 seminars. However, due to organisational problems and absence from the module tutor, only 7 lectures and 3 seminars take place before the examination. As a result you have not covered key parts of the teaching and learning plan and lost the opportunity to ask questions.

Scenario 3:

You recently returned some books to the library. However, you receive a letter informing you that the books are now overdue and you will be fined every day until they have been returned. You check once again and you have not got the books at home, although you do not have any proof that you have returned them.

N.B. Tick boxes were provided for each of the above items on the online survey.

Appendix F: Screen dumps from www.acculturation.co.uk

Website Home Page:

Microsoft Internet Explorer window showing the website <http://www.acculturation.co.uk/>. The page has a sidebar with a logo and the text "New Survey: Chinese Survey". The main content area is titled "Welcome" and contains the following text:

Many thanks for agreeing to take part in this research project. This study is looking at the impact of culture on consumer complaining.

The survey is in three sections and is easy to complete - it will mostly involve answering questions by clicking boxes. The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked to include some personal details at the end of the questionnaire.

Ethical issues - Your rights

Information obtained in this study, including this consent form, will be kept strictly confidential (i.e. will not be passed to others). Individuals who are invited for a follow up interview will be contacted in early 2007, and their identities will also be protected in subsequent work.

Data obtained through this research may be reproduced and published in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences related to the broad nature of the research. It will not be used for purposes other than those outlined above without your permission.

Participation is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time. Respondents wishing to know more about the study and its findings can email the researcher at david@acculturation.co.uk.

By ticking the box below, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study on the basis of the above information.

I fully understand the above information ☐

Select language

For your convenience, the survey has been prepared in both English and Simplified Chinese. Please select your preferred language to start the survey:

*You will be required to enter some information in English

At the bottom of the page, there are links for "Start new survey" and "Complete Survey" (with a Microsoft Word icon).

Acculturation Scale Page:

Microsoft Internet Explorer window showing the "Acculturation Scale" page. The page title is "Acculturation Scale: Courtesy of Darcy, D (2004)". The sidebar shows "New Survey: Chinese Survey". The main content area is titled "Acculturation Scale" and contains the following text:

This section will focus on the way you have adapted to life in the UK.

Please find below a list of statements. For each statement, click the appropriate box (numbered 1-7) to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement from the below scale:

1 - Strongly Disagree (SD)
2 - Disagree
3 - Somewhat Disagree
4 - Don't Agree or Disagree
5 - Somewhat Agree
6 - Agree
7 - Strongly Agree (SA)

1. I write better in English than in my native language

1 SD 2 3 4 5 6 7 SA

2. Most of the music I listen to is Asian

1 SD 2 3 4 5 6 7 SA

3. I tell jokes both in English and in my native language

1 SD 2 3 4 5 6 7 SA

4. Generally, I find it difficult to socialize with anybody, Asian or English

1 SD 2 3 4 5 6 7 SA

5. When I am in my apartment/house, I typically speak English

1 SD 2 3 4 5 6 7 SA

Appendix G: Example Interview Plan

Interview Plan (based on Banaka, 1971)

A. The Role Relationships of the Interviewer (ER) and the Interviewee (EE)

- **ER's role**

ER is a second year PhD student conducting research into the South East Asian student body of Northumbria University. ER has met EE previously as a tutor on a Marketing module, and the only other contact has been through email. ER needs to conduct a number of interviews to answer the research sub-questions which could not be answered from a previous online survey. ER expects EE to co-operate in order to provide the required inputs.

- **EE's role**

EE is a South-East Asian university student and has already participated in an online survey set up by ER. EE has provided consent for ER to contact him at a later date and request an interview. EE does not necessarily have any academic knowledge of the subject area (s) that he is to be questioned on, and has not been told any specifics of the interview plan. Eric responded to the invitation within days of it being sent.

B. Formulation of the Problem

- **Description of the problem**

The interview is needed to enable ER to understand the acculturation and CCB experiences of EE. Previous quantitative research has not addressed the research sub-questions. ER wants to uncover whether any changes made by EE have been a conscious process and any comparisons that EE may have made between their home and host cultures with regards CCB.

- **Information available before the interview**

All previous information about EE has been gained through the online survey in stage one and therefore is assumed to be fact (demographic information) or reflect EE's opinions (EAAM and SCBS). A summary is provided below:

Demographics: Male, aged 22-23, from Malaysia with no reported religious background. Is studying Engineering and has been in the UK between 7 and 9 months at the time of the interview.

EAAM Scores:

Assimilation	3.00
Separation	3.57
Integration	4.60
Marginalisation	2.44

SCBS Overall Scores

Public	4.75
Private	2.75
Third Party	1.38
Non-behavioural	1.33

C. Outputs

- **The Transcription**

The transcription is to be used in ER's PhD thesis as a method of data collection used to answer the specified research sub-questions. The findings may also be potentially used in any subsequent publications related to the research. The data will be confidential i.e. the name of the respondent will not be connected to the data.

- **Outputs**

- **1:** Has EE consciously adopted a particular acculturation style or has it been a subconscious process?
- **2:** Has EE's CCB has changed since arriving in the United Kingdom. This will require some level of comparison between time in EE's home country and now.
- **3:** How does EE feel about the idea of complaining about their university? Do they feel that they have a right to complain as consumers or should they be grateful for the opportunity to study abroad?

D. EE Inputs

- **Output 1:** What, if any, changes has EE made to adjust to life in the UK, do they feel as if they have made a particular effort to fit in and has this been successful. How would they describe their interaction with people from the host culture?

- **Output 2:** Discussion of previous CCB in home country, any experiences of CCB in the UK and any comparisons. Also any thoughts on which sort of CCB are most appropriate (e.g. voice / private).
- **Output 3:** How would you feel about criticising a person in authority about your course? Do you feel you have a right to complain? Would this issue be raised in your home country?

Contextual Data: (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007):

Location of interview: Drill Hall Room 002

Date and Time: Monday 18th June, 11:00

Setting: Relaxed seminar room in a quiet part of the university campus outside of teaching or examination periods. Refreshments are offered to relax the participant.

Background information on respondent: See summary in part B

Immediate impression of how the interview went:

Interview Schedule:

Introduction:

- Many thanks for agreeing to take part in the research – refreshments!
- Reiterate aims of the interview (revolve around two themes – Acc and CCB)
- Mechanics: Informal atmosphere, interaction encouraged, my involvement, length and approximate number of questions
- Ethical issues & consent – talk through the conditions on page two and get signature

Please bear in mind that I am not discussing these issues as a teacher / lecturer, but as an impartial researcher who is keen to learn. There are no right or wrong answers, and nothing you say will be passed on to other members of staff outside my research team. At any point if you wish to end your participation in the interview you are free to leave – also if there is one particular question you are not willing to answer please make this known to me. The questions are not designed to be intrusive so hopefully no problems will occur.

Please note that at points I may write down additional observations, which may be connected to things such as your body language and intonation of your voice. This doesn't mean what you are saying is right or wrong, merely something interesting that adds to the data from the tape recording. You can get a transcript of this interview two months from today by emailing me – I will be happy to get your further opinion on what is discussed today.

Are we ready to begin?

Ice Breaker:

- ☐ Am I right in thinking you are studying Engineering? Is this at undergraduate or postgraduate level and how did you become interested in this subject area?
- ☐ How are you finding it?
- ☐ Have you studied Engineering before coming to England? What are the main differences between studying in the two countries?

#Lead toward countries / culture angle of discussion#

Notes:

Theme 1: Acculturation Styles of International Students

- ☐ Were you aware of the changes you may have to make to your values and behaviours before you came to the UK?
- ☐ Was moving to the UK a 'scary or stressful' experience?
- ☐ Did you have a 'plan' as to how you were going to deal with life in the UK?
- ☐ Do you feel you have had to adapt to life in the UK? If so, how (e.g. friends, food)
- ☐ Talk me through how you felt in your first few days in the UK and on campus?
- ☐ Are there many international students on your course or in your school?
- ☐ Talk me through your living arrangements here at the university?
Are you satisfied with this?
- ☐ In what situations do you speak English and your first language?
#Elaborate#
- ☐ Have you been made welcome by the UK students? Could they have done anything more to help you settle in?

- ☐ Do you feel you have successfully adapted to life in the UK? Why / why not? Has it been an easy transition?
- ☐ If you were moving to the UK again, would you prepare for life here any differently?
- ☐ Have you ever felt lonely during your time in the UK? Societal involvement? #Elaborate#
- ☐ What are the key things you think you have earned about yourself or life in general whilst living and studying in the UK?

Notes:

Theme 2: Complaint Behaviours in different countries

- ☐ Describe how you would most likely respond to being dissatisfied as a consumer in your home country?
- ☐ How do you think your family would act if they were unhappy with a product or service?
- ☐ Can you recall any dissatisfactory experiences you have had in your home country (banks, shops, restaurants etc.)?
- ☐ Can you recall any dissatisfactory experiences you have had in the UK (banks, shops, restaurants etc.)?
- ☐ When you do complain to any company, how do you feel they should react in order to ensure you are satisfied?

- ☐ Do you feel that you behave in the same manner now you are in the UK?
- ☐ Do you feel it more appropriate to complain in your home country or the UK?

Notes:

Theme 3: Attitudes towards complaining in a university setting

- ☐ Do you feel like a customer or a student of the university? Why?
- ☐ Do you feel you have a right to criticise the university if they do not provide a satisfactory service?
- ☐ Have you ever been dissatisfied with any aspect of university experience? If so, how did you react?

- ☐ If you were unhappy about a university issue, what avenues are you aware of that you can use to vent your dissatisfaction?
#Elaborate third party angle#
- ☐ Do you regularly discuss your negative experiences with friends or fellow course mates, family etc?
- ☐ What do you understand by the term Student Representative?
#Elaborate#
- ☐ Do you have differing opinions about criticising academic and non-academic staff?
- ☐ When complaining to a member of staff, how would you prefer to do so (channels)?
- ☐ Would it be acceptable to complain about a teacher/lecturer in your home country?

Notes:

Close:

- Many thanks for your time
- Please feel free to take a biscuit / cake away with you
- Reiterate how the interview will be used – offer opportunity to see manuscript in future
- Any questions?

Appendix H: Example Completed Interview Transcriptions

Date:	20 th June 2008	Key: DH: David Hart IE: Interviewee E
Venue:	Drill Hall Building	
Interviewer:	David Hart	
Participant:	Interviewee E	

Speaker	Comments
DH	<p>Well thank you very much for agreeing to come along today. Before we start, I just have a number of points I need to cover to make sure I am addressing the relevant ethical issues. What the interview is about is an elaboration of the survey you will remember completing a few months ago. Firstly, the interview will be about your time in the UK and how you have adapted to living in another culture. And the second is to find out a little more about your behaviour as a consumer and as a student - basically building on the questions from the survey. May I remind you at this stage that you were of course selected at random for this interview – you were not selected deliberately based upon your responses to the survey. We'll have this discussion nice and informal, and feel free to take a drink at any time if you need to. On an ethical level I require you to sign on of these ethical forms, which highlight the purpose of this research and confirm your rights as a participant. There are two of these to sign – one for you to keep so you have my personal contact details, the other is for my records.</p> <p>(Signatures taken on both forms)</p> <p>In line with the ethical guidelines, none of these questions have been designed to be too sensitive or offensive, but if at any point you feel there is a question you don't want to answer please let me know and that is fine. Also if you feel you are not enjoying the interview then you are free to leave the room at any time. That's not your right as a participant. Please feel free to ask any questions if you are unsure at any point.</p>

	<p>When this interview is written up your name will be removed from the transcription so you will not be attached to the data – you will simply be known as Interviewee A or interviewee B etc. Lastly, this interview will be typed up by a colleague of mine – only myself and this colleague will hear this transcription. If you wish to see a copy of this transcription at a later date then simply send me an email and I will happily pass it on to you. Aside from that the only people who will actually see the transcript will be my supervision team. Does everything seem OK before we start? Are there any questions?</p>
DH	First of all, I just want to find out a little bit about the course that you're on – is it quantity surveying you're studying?
IE	Yeah, quantity surveying
DH	So, tell me a little bit about that. Is it postgraduate or?
IE	Undergraduate. It is a bachelor degree.
DH	And where are you based? Where do you do most of your classes? What building?
IE	Ellison Building
DH	Ellison Building, OK. How are you finding the course? Is it OK?
IE	Not too bad. Mostly, most are third year because I think most of the people think that quantity surveying is doing a lot of calculations or what. But actual we learn quite a lot about the contracts, the laws and anything about the buildings, the construction, yeah.
DH	Also, you've got a wide basis of knowledge there like the business stuff and the legal stuff.
IE	Yeah, everything.
DH	That's good because I suppose you'll need that if you're going to go in to a career.
IE	Yeah, that's true.
DH	So, how did you get interested in quantity surveying?
IE	To be honest, at first, I don't know anything about quantity surveying. I still remember when I finished high school and then, actually I have a chance to go to Malaysia's university, just local university, and they offer me sports science course. But, it's quite interesting actually, I prefer sports rather than construction but the problem is for long term work because sports cannot become a career for me in Malaysia. I mean in Malaysia because in Malaysia sport is not well developed comparing with England.
DH	We take our sport very seriously.
IE	Yeah, yeah you can see from football and cricket and rugby, anything. So, in Malaysia – no. So, my parents

	have a discussion with me so they chose a course for me at the time. So, I say there is no harm for me – just take it – go for a try. I start with a diploma course in the college there in Malaysia. I took a two year diploma course and find it not too bad – quite interesting – calculations, buildings. And then after I finish my diploma and then Northumbria University was one who offered me £1,400 of scholarship so I chose to come to Northumbria University.
DH	It must be difficult studying a subject that you didn't chose.
IE	Yeah, that's true. You just have to firstly understand what that course is about.
DH	It's very different to sports!
IE	Totally different.
DH	But you couldn't get two courses more different than that.
IE	Because at first I also think about am I electrical? Am I mechanical? Am I chemical? Am I biology? So in many senses, those engineering courses can be confusing. Besides, I liked civil engineering, accounting and business. Those are still fine for me – so quantity surveying – OK, just go for a try. Sounds very strange because I'd never heard of it before because all we heard is that you know civil engineering, you know accountant but you never know what is quantity surveying. What is this?
DH	You never meet anybody on the street who says "oh, I'm a quantity surveyor."
IE	No. There are very few quantity surveyors, especially in my home town because what they do is civil engineering takes into everything, you know. Civil engineer – they can do all kinds of drawings, they kind do type of calculations, everything – they can handle everything. Actually, they don't even need architecture.
DH	The industry is very different back home.
IE	It is just a small project. There isn't any big, large projects in my home town. So, my home town is just a small town. So, they don't need a quantity surveyor. I talk about it with one of my friends who already worked in the construction industry for a few years who said "what? A quantity surveyor. Chose civil engineering. It's real, you know. At least you'll get a job when you come back."
DH	So you'll have quite a specialist skill base compared to what other people have in Malaysia. That will give you a good chance. So, you did a diploma....
IE	In Malaysia.
DH	And then you've obviously done the UG degree here. What have been the big differences in teaching and

	being a student?
IE	The college in Malaysia, there mostly is spoon feeding – you know? Just give you everything. They seldom ask you to dig research about something like here you need to do assignments and coursework that you need to find extra information. And then again the lecture will require you to write more than what they taught in the lectures. But I don't know other universities the lecture teachers pass on the notes and they what will be coming out in the exams is just like "you study this part this part, this part – OK. These are the tips. You study all of them then you will get high marks." You don't need to write extra and any other information – just based on – even if I memorised a whole paragraph exactly the same then write it down, then I can get the full marks for that part.
DH	So basically, they just coach you to pass an exam.
IE	Yeah.
DH	Do you prefer that system or do you like what you're doing now here?
IE	For exams I would prefer that because I'm not good at writing. It is quite tough for me because something is quite hard to express in another language. If you request me to write in Chinese – yes, there's no problem for me. But in doing assignments or research of dates I prefer this way, because you can learn more. Especially you know how to use the computer. You know how to find the information on line or accidents in the construction industry people to get the information are dead. But in Malaysia, you go to library, get some books, copy down everything. That's it – that's my assignment – that's easy.
DH	It's incredible – it's so different. Well, that's really interesting. Some of the questions I'm going to talk about now are focussed on how you've had to adapt to life in the UK. How old are you?
IE	I'm 25.
DH	You're 25 now so you were 23 when you came over here. Had you been out of Malaysia before then? Had you travelled very far?
IE	No. This is the first. This is the furthest I've travelled. In Malaysia it's only like Singapore – next to Malaysia. Or Thailand is also next to Malaysia – that's it. I've never travelled that far.
DH	To the UK.
IE	Yet suddenly, 20 hour flights.
DH	That's a long way. Before you came, obviously a point came when you got offered the place by Northumbria and you decided to come to England, did you think about what sort of changes you might have to make to your lifestyle or anything like that? Did you think a great

	deal?
IE	<p>Actually, at first I have a choice. I can choose to go to Australia or here. Australia is very much nearer to Malaysia. You don't have to take that long flight. But after deep consideration I want to learn something that's to be more independent because in Australia I have too many friends there. If I go there I would just depend on them, that OK, you help me to find rooms, and what are we going to eat tonight – so you guys arrange. You got a car so I don't really need to know this place – that place like Australia. But in UK, here it's totally different. So, at first, I don't really know Newcastle well but at first, I also don't know how to click on line to search for the information about Newcastle and so I just make sure that I have a place to stay and get some information from my seniors who are here and through emails basically, doing it for a month – expenses. It is more confident to live in the university accommodation or private accommodation? Those are the only things.</p>
DH	<p>They were the functional things of actually getting settled and making sure you've got somewhere to live. Those were the difficult things for you. Did you have an idea of what English people were like before you came over?</p>
IE	<p>I would say they are just like in the movies. But, yeah just like in the movies – I think they are basically like that, yeah, more or less.</p>
DH	<p>Did you find moving here scary?</p>
IE	<p>I was quite excited, actually. At first it is a mixture of feelings. Some scary and exciting because you've got the chance to go to a place that is totally – like you don't know that place – totally a stranger for you. So, it is quite excited, yeah.</p>
DH	<p>Talk you through your first few days – can you remember when you first arrived? What was it like? When you were just getting settled here, how did it feel?</p>
IE	<p>When I first arrived, luckily, I have a senior pick me out. The Meet and Greet Officers brought me to the Ellison Building there to set it down, to ask for information about accommodation I did. My senior takes me to his place because I'm going to stay with him. The first few days is a very hard life because everything has to calculate because the currency is 7 times different – 1 pound is equal to 7 bahts in Malaysia – so whatever I want to buy “this is £1 is 7 – that makes it very much expensive. No, not as strong, I'll chose the cheaper one.” And then the first few days is very hard to catch the language here, the works, the language. It's very hard. Why is the English they pronounce is totally different from what I heard on TV.</p>
DH	<p>You have come to an area in England where the accent</p>

	is very different.
IE	Very strong. I said "oh. What?"
DH	I talk a bit like that myself but I'm trying to be more neutral.
IE	OK.
DH	So that was difficult for you to talk to English people.
IE	Yeah. And then also the weather here is very much colder than in Malaysia.
DH	I was going to ask you about the weather. Do you like it?
IE	Sometimes. Sometimes, you expect winter and expect more snow but not many here.
DH	Not compared to what we used to get. We used to get a lot more in the past. So, what sort of food do you eat?
IE	Mostly I cook myself, like just rice and vegetables mixed and then some rice. Just do ordinary Chinese food.
DH	It's just traditional Chinese food?
IE	Yeah, but sometimes when I'm lazy, that's back at the end pasta, those things are easier, I cook them and like some sauce – that's it.
DH	You don't really eat a great deal of what we call "English food?"
IE	No really.
DH	Not really your sort....
IE	Because I prefer to have some rice and meat, vegetables and, yeah.....
DH	You're on the quantity surveying course. How many students are on that course in your year? Is it a big group? Or....
IE	I think about 60-70. I include those like part timers and full timers there.
DH	Are there a lot of international students?
IE	From my place there are about 15 or 50. Yeah, including the Hong Kong, Brunei, Malaysia entry.
DH	The majority of them are from sort of.....
IE	Malaysia.
DH	Malaysia and the surrounding countries. Has that made it easier for you, do you think?
IE	Yeah, we normally just stick in a group like that – just 15 people of us – always hang around or travelling. Just 15 of us.
DH	And you're all from Malaysia? Yeah? So did you get to know them right at the beginning?
IE	Yeah because you feel closer. People say "Malaysian? Yes I am. Where are you from? ??????" Yeah, the feelings closer when you have just learnt to know there are some friends from Malaysia around.
DH	There are other groups – there's people from Brunei, for example. Do they stick together as well in little groups?

IE	Yeah, there is one Bruneian. Not really because they are mostly Malays and sometimes because, it depends on what situation is, sometimes they not prefer to join us but some of the time they do join us.
DH	There is still a reasonable number of English students on this course then. So, what about them?
IE	We don't really know them well. Not really close because basically, we don't have grab a chance to talk them, to know them, to make friends with them. Just, I think the only time I hang out with the English guys was on the study trip. In the first year, there was a study trip. We went to Holland and Amsterdam and I just started to think "these are ordinary English guys." Pops, beers! Because when I was there for the first day and the last day because the first day it was?????and didn't want to go out for a look around, so we mix with them and all go out together. And then the last night, it was like "uh, we've finished everything." Because we went there for doing some sort of introduce our course to them to their home university there because they don't have a quantity surveying course. The last day of the trip it was like everything released – time to do some relax – go to pub, yeah. I don't mean everyone, just going from one pub to another one. Just finish one or two pints of beer and then another one, another one. And then lastly, about the time 12pm, 1am, it is about the time to stick to one so drink more and dance. That's it, yeah. That's the only time. That's the only moment, I think, I'm crazy with – just have some fun with the English guys.
DH	Obviously, if you were with a group of Malaysian students that day, you wouldn't have done that? You wouldn't have gone to the pubs and stuff?
IE	I would still go because that is what I expect. I want to relax really. But it's quite interesting to know what they normally do. Because, I think, the time here is quite boring for me because what I do normally, I prefer to do some outer games like basketball or some jogging. But it's quite cold here and there are not many people playing basketball because everyone is playing football. They say "oh no." It is quite boring.
DH	That's what English people do – they just go to the pub.
IE	Yeah, yeah. How we have at night, normally, they will have some conversations, for you can get some fried noodles, get a cup of tea and then you can just talk every night with friends, just chitchatting. But here, what you have at night you can't do anything besides going to the pub – that's it.
DH	Unfortunately so, sometimes, yeah. You mentioned, where did you live when you first came here. You were living in the Halls.

IE	No, a private arrangement which I arranged outside here.
DH	Where do you live?
IE	Somewhere near Heaton.
DH	Oh alright. I know Heaton well. I've lived there before. Who do you live in Heaton with?
IE	With one of my seniors and then together with another two.
DH	Seniors – are they people in a higher year? What do you mean by the word “seniors?”
IE	Studies from Malaysia as well and then studying quantity surveying before. But he has finished his degree and is going for MBA, at that time.
DH	And how many people were you living with.
IE	There are 4 of us altogether.
DH	How do you find living?
IE	It is hard for first year because there was some arguments appears between my senior and the other housemates. I was just like stuck in the middle. So, I follow. I don't know where to go. It is quite hard because there is some argument. Just leave the issues, I think. Why do we want to make so serious of it. So, it is quite hard for the first year and it was like little bit being treated like that, because the room is so small. In my hometown I used to live in a large room. I had my own room, massive room which is very much bigger and suddenly, come over here to single rooms, which my bed is there, the table, cupboard and after I pull out my chair, you already stick to the bed so I have literally “this” space to move.
DH	How about Heaton as a place? Do you like Heaton?
IE	I think my place is quite noisy at night and I still remember last year when there was some guys they keep on having parties at night. Yeah – they're quite noisy. But Heaton is fine because everything is near – Morrison's – and then there are some shop around again it's near. Quite convenient for me, I think.
DH	And there are quite a few international students live around there, I find as well. It probably makes it easier for you as well. It strikes me that the majority of time you are around people who are not English. You spend a lot of time with fellow Malaysians. Do you speak English often?
IE	Not really, but only this year compared with last year. Because this year, I have spent some of my time applying for the jobs - the graduate jobs – so I have some interviews or met some people that makes me speak more English compared with last year, after the class I just go back to me own language again.

DH	Is that because it's easier for you?
IE	Yeah, yeah.
DH	You mentioned before, do you find it difficult to write in English?
IE	Definitely.
DH	What about reading?
IE	Reading is not a problem here for me here but writing is a problem. Reading and listening has to be, depends on the situations. So, the others are still fine but writing is a big problem for me, yeah. I'm still learning now.
DH	Learning any other language is difficult let alone learning to write fluently in it. Do you wish you had a little bit more interaction with English people.
IE	Yeah. That's what I think. I hope so because that's why I want to stay here to work. Not only because the opportunities here are higher, but also because I really want to, and I think during students' life, for me, I would limit my activities because if I go to the pub I spend money. Everything "Oh, I've spent it. I've spent this." But if I work, I don't mind. Just go out for some relax, have some beers, chitchatting with friends. Actually, for me it's quite interesting to have the time to really explore what the living style is, the culture, what they really do, what they eat, what they normally, why do they like sports – like football and rugby so much. Wish to have some close friends with English guys.
DH	Do you feel that you maybe don't know the English culture as well as you had hoped to know.
IE	Yeah.
DH	That's a shame because that's one of the reasons why you wanted to come here. Do you feel that looking back over the 2 years that you've been here that you've adapted quite well? You've settled down here?
IE	Yeah, yeah.
DH	Is there anything you would do differently?
IE	I quite like, I think it's different because it's in Newcastle or what, life here is more relaxed. You don't need to have to be like you have to rush here and there comparing with London, a big city like that. When you go out, you see the old folks they will greet you and smile and "hey! Hello." It's quite friendly and polite. There, I've adapted quite well especially the weather.
DH	You just had to buy more clothes.
IE	I don't need more clothes now. But is quite hard for me as well. When you go back for holiday, you feel "oh no. It's hot." When you've got used to the English weather and go back to Malaysia. Have you been to Malaysia before?
DH	No.

IE	The weather is very hot and humid throughout the year. You only have summer and rainy days.
DH	We just have the rainy days but not as bad as the rain you get, from what I've heard. Do you think the UK students have made you feel welcome?
IE	Do you mean the students?
DH	Yeah, the students. Like on your course, for example, do you think they've done a lot to help you settle in?
IE	A few of them. Not really. If I go into the class, there'll just have their own friends. Afterwards, they'll just leave with them.
DH	So, maybe they could've done a bit more to welcome you and make you feel...
IE	Yeah, yeah, I think so. But there are one or two English guys, they are quite helpful and just nice. They were willing to help us, if you have some questions to ask them, they are willing to help you out.
DH	That's nice. Is it questions about work?
IE	Yeah.
DH	Have you ever felt, I mentioned this at the beginning a little bit, but have you ever felt lonely?
IE	To be honest – yes.
DH	Is that all the way through? Or earlier on?
IE	Especially the first year. This year is very much better than the first year because I don't have friends here. I don't have any friends, I come here alone, I don't have any relatives, I don't know anybody here. I just know one or two from my college. They were here as well but I don't know them. Like my seniors, I don't know them as well, actually, but truth – my friend's friend – he's not really my friend just my friend's friend. I come and just keep in touch with them through email – I never met them before – I don't know who they are. Everything is quite strange. I couldn't find anyone to speak to here. Most of the time I stick with the computer.
DH	The computer was your friend.
IE	Yeah, at least I can chat with friends, my family are there through computer, emails and it is very much easier, yeah.
DH	It must be difficult, I think. I'm assuming back in Malaysia, you've got plenty of friends.
IE	Yeah, yeah.
DH	So, you go back in the summer – did you go back last summer?
IE	Yeah, yeah.
DH	Did you like that – having all those friends?
IE	It was great.
DH	Like you say, you're constantly adapting because you're over here for 9 months so you finally get used to living

	here and then you go back home for the summer.
IE	The weather, the weather.
DH	If someone, obviously you say you spend a lot of time on the computer and you're probably talking to people back home, what sort of things do you tell them about England.
IE	What happens to me every day. Then just tell them "I hang out today with the English friends and then we some activities," and I tell them what they look like, and then what we have done in the pub, and we're going from one pub to another pub and then tell them what I experience here. And because there's some English guys they were quite rude as well actually especially when you go to streets you find some guys who suddenly – I'm not quite sure – they started screaming. Do they think it's funny?
DH	Newcastle does have a lot of people like that, unfortunately. What do your family think about what you've said? Do they like the sound of England, do you think?
IE	They don't like western country but they will still send their children to western countries for education but they will not encourage them to stay there, to work. Like my sisters, both of them are graduating in Australia and then they'll go back straight away after they graduate.
DH	Do your family expect you to go home?
IE	Yes, they do.
DH	But you might stay?
IE	Yeah, yeah, I just want to try to work for one or two years here to get some experience because there are more opportunities here compared with Malaysia.
DH	A bigger industry I suppose, then maybe go home if that experience is
IE	Yeah, that's true.
DH	It sounds like you've had some really big challenges being here. What I want to move onto now is to talk about some of what was the other part of the questionnaire and start talking about your behaviour as a customer, because we're all customers on a daily basis, be it when we go to the bank, or to shop, or to the cinema or to a pub, and then another pub and another pub. I just want to find out a little bit about that. I was thinking, in particular what my research is looking at is when people have bad experiences with companies. So, if you buy a product or a service and it isn't very good, or if it's faulty, or something goes wrong and stuff. Have you had any experiences like that in England?
IE	Oh, yes. Especially with the mobile phone. The first contract I signed here was introduced by my friend because my friend told me that "oh, this is a good deal.

	Half price for the 12 months.” - No, 12 months free line rental and I get a free phone – Oh, this sounds great, I think. I don’t need to pay anything. But after that, I realise that I still have to pay every month but they would send me the cash back every 3 months, 4 months. OK – I said this is fine, I’ll pay this. But after 4 months the company suddenly run away. We couldn’t find the company again so the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ we had to pay the full price and we couldn’t get cash back again. We were quite angry with them. We call to their phone company and ask them “where is the company?” Because they are just a dealer they are not the phone company.
DH	So they kind of disappeared?
IE	Yeah, just disappear. Close the door and they ran away.
DH	And obviously kept taking your money for the rest of the year.
IE	Yeah, we couldn’t....
DH	That’s horrible. How did you feel? Are you angry about that?
IE	Yeah, of course. I just feel I’ve been cheated. And then some of my friends just stopped paying for the remaining bills because we don’t like the phones actually. We take the contract because of 12 months free line rental. So, they would prefer to stop paying the rentals because they couldn’t get cash back. They have a better service from other companies so why do we need to continue paying for their rental, I guess, so they just stopped. Even the phone company, you still had to pay because they are just dealer – dealer run away – you still have to pay the phone company. But they would just look for them for the rentals but they couldn’t get any because.....
DH	That must be really frustrating because you want to go in and complain and say how unhappy you were, but they’d disappeared.
IE	We would try all kinds of ways like I think what my friend, he went for his coat somewhere near the Grainger Market and they talk about like consumer rights.
DH	The Citizens Advice Bureau
IE	I think so. We did talk to them and then they advise us what you need to do – keep the bills and send it to where again – but useless.
DH	Because the company’s disappeared? I’m sorry to hear that you had to go through that. I wonder, because you said a friend recommended that to you, was the fact that a friend recommended it important to you.
IE	Yeah because at first, he recommend me and then I would go for a look and check it out, because he has been using it for 1 or 2 months already and it is easier

	us, internationals, to get first contract here in UK because you know – firstly, you have to have the statement. You have to have proof of address to get a contract but that dealer just, to make things convenient and easier, just let “you are international student, you prove me your passport. Ok, that’s fine. You get a deal”
DH	That’s a shame. At least you followed a lot of avenues. I mean, you tried. You went to the advice bureau, you tried to contact them, you tried to get it right. Have you had any other bad experiences or is that just been the only one.
IE	Its fine, I think. Just the phone problem. But recently, I renewed a contract and I got another phone but after 1 month plus and suddenly the phone just broke down like that. I’ve no idea what’s wrong with it. I called the phone company and they send somebody here and then take the phone back to repair it and then send it back and say “sorry, we couldn’t repair it because it is software problems. It’s not hardware. So, it’s not included in our warranty.” “What?” I said “I just got this phone for a month, now you told me that it’s software problem and you’re not going to repair it for me? ??? Pay for it?” I said “I keep it well and then I protect it well. I still treat it very nicely. It still look new.” I said “What’s wrong? Software problem, are you kidding?”
DH	And they wouldn’t do anything about it?
IE	No. They said – you just need to pay. You have to pay to repair it. Then they say – but it’s not worth it. You have to pay £100 + to repair. What they advise is that you get another phone. Buy a new one.
DH	Which should be cheaper but will still cost you money. You haven’t had much luck with phones. You’re very unlucky.
IE	Very unlucky, yeah.
DH	Have you talked to your friends about these experiences?
IE	Yeah, yeah.
DH	Do you do that when things go wrong?
IE	Sure. Definitely.
DH	Why do you do that, do you think?
IE	Because I don’t want them to be cheated. I just want ask them to don’t follow my experience. If they take experience a lesson.
DH	It’s good that people talk to each like that and protect their friends. I’m just trying to think, this might be testing your memory a bit further, but when you were back in Malaysia – did you ever have problems with phones or any other products back home? Did that sort of thing happen over there?

IE	Because in Malaysia they have no such thing like having a contract with the phone company and get a phone. What they normally do is – there are two types – prepaid and also the contract based. For the contract based, it is just like line rental. You don't get a phone – you still have to buy the phone yourself. It doesn't have a problem and then you are dealing directly with, normally with contract ones you are dealing directly with the company like 3 company, the O2 company. You are not dealing with a dealer in between. So if there is anything wrong – you deal with them directly. They will pay the responsibility for you so there is no problem in Malaysia because I think it's easier.
DH	In general, just moving away from phones, maybe stores in general – shops, what is their policy on you returning products. Say, you bought a product – a TV – from a store and it was faulty or something. Would the stores in Malaysia allow you to return the product?
IE	Yeah.
DH	They're quite good.
IE	They're allowed. But, the same, I think ? But normally in Malaysia, not many people would do so because everything is cheap. They won't say "oh, this is bad. I'll have to go back to the supermarket again and exchange one or get my cash back." They will say "it's broken. Just throw away. I'm not going to buy there again next time. That's it."
DH	So, they'll quite simply switch to another product and not go back to the store.
IE	Yeah, that's it. But here you are like "this thing is not functioning well. I have to bring it back. I have to ask for exchange or cash back."
DH	And that's because it's more expensive over here?
IE	Yeah. But it still compares with what kind of stuff. If it is only a few pence that's broken – well just forget it. It doesn't matter. Just keep it in mind – never buy this again.
DH	Good advice. Is that how your family would react back home, say your parents if they had a problem with quite an expensive product would they go back to the store, do you think?
IE	Yeah, yeah, definitely. For expensive stuff. What I mean, just now is for the food. They won't care so much for the food, if it is broken – just throw it away. But for clothes, electrical stuff – they will still complain, send it back, ask them to change ones or get a cash back.
DH	Do you think the companies in Malaysia are good? Are they good at customer service in those situations?
IE	I don't know apart from mine. My home town is quite nice because it's a small town so everyone knows each

	other, so normally my family will stick to the few stores that they are friend so the just say "OK, come on – friend. What is the price of the TV – come on, give me a discount" the person will do it a special discount for this price here.
DH	That's good. So the personal relationship actually helps as being a customer. Say you were to complain, let's go back to the example of the phone that you had in this country – all the problems you've had with your phones – how do you think companies should react when you complain? You ring them up or you go to the store and you say "I'm not happy with this, this is faulty." What should they do to make up for it, in your opinion?
IE	I think they try their best. I don't know because the customer service – they are quite patient, actually, because I keep on complaining. I am quite angry but they still say "oh, I'm sorry. I couldn't do anything. Sorry." I think they try their best, yeah. But, maybe I just need to blame for my own? Couldn't blame anybody. But I just wondering, because I signed the same contract with the same company and the first phones are not going well. And the second phone is the same as well. I said "oh, terrible. Next time, I'm not going to sign for this company again. No more. I'm not going to renew."
DH	You learned your lesson there.
IE	I was still thinking "second phone's good phone. Yeah. Not too bad." But after a month, "What?" Broken. No choice – blame myself. But I just don't understand why it can get broken so easily.
DH	It is disappointing. You mentioned that they were quite patient on the phone and stuff. Is that important, do you think?
IE	Yeah, I think it's very important, yeah, because no matter how the customer complains they are angry. You are working – you have to accept that. I think that this stuff is quite normal for them. Talking to the angry customer –sorry, sorry, sorry – to comfort them down first. That's true, I believe.
DH	Are the financial issues important to you as well? Like you say, getting a refund or that sort of thing?
IE	Getting a refund, yeah.
DH	Is that the most important thing? Or is it more important that they are patient and apologise and friendly.
IE	I prefer to get the cash back. If they do allow me to cancel the contract and get my cash back, I would be happiest
DH	But unfortunately, they're not very good at that. Do you think that it's the act of complaining, the actual act of complaining to someone about a product, do you think

	it's more appropriate to do that in England or Malaysia?
IE	Complain?
DH	Actually complain, yeah.
IE	I'm not quite sure.
DH	That's fine. You have to have experience of both. Last sort of few questions that I've got for you – talking about this idea of complaining and being unhappy with products, yeah, but now focussing on your time in the university. Because obviously, you've been here for 2 years now so things might have etc. The first question I want to ask you is – I'm assuming you or your family pay fees to come here to the university. Do you feel like you're a student of the university? Or do you sometimes feel like you're maybe a customer?
IE	Yeah, I did. I feel that I pay more compared with the local students, yeah. I'm supposed to be receiving more than them.
DH	Do you feel that you do get more?
IE	Not really because maybe, it's not because of the university but from the other companies, like we want to find part-time jobs – it's very much harder compared with local people. You have to compete with them to get a job. Even the part time jobs, yeah.
DH	Do you think it's fair that you have to pay higher fees than local people?
IE	I don't know. I just think that education is supposed to be the service and then we come here and we are already pay more for the expenses because we still have to rent house and we have to pay for the bills – everything we have to pay. And then, maybe, the tuition fees can be more expensive than the locals – it is 1.5 times more expensive. Yeah, I think the local people only need to pay about £3,000 is it?
DH	I think so, the maximum.
IE	£1-3000. But we have to pay £7-8,000 per annum. Yeah, that's a lot. And then that has actually limited the international students from coming over here because some of them couldn't afford that much money, especially for the tuition fees here.
DH	It's a lot of money, especially if you're here for more than one year. 2 years – that's £14-16,000.
IE	Actually, I pay more for the first year and the university can still offer something like a scholarship for them to apply. But there's no – I've asked the international office, last year I think I asked them, "if you get good results in first year, for example 1 st class, can we get a scholarship?" They went "no. Sorry."
DH	Is that because there was none available?
IE	He said "no scholarship offer by the university here."

	He's not being very helpful.
IE	If there is a scholarship I think we will even fight harder to get a scholarship. Study harder and there's something I'm working on to.
DH	With such paying so much money out, if the university does something wrong, do you feel you have the right to complain about it?
IE	Definitely, yeah. I think that taking a strike, for the lecturers or some of them say "oh sorry. No class next week." And the university suddenly has a holiday – it's not a bank holiday – and just some of the lecturers have taken part in the strike activity. I think that it's not our business. Our lectures cost money. Our lecture is about £100 per day.
DH	You mentioned the holidays – were you referring to the enhancement weeks, the breaks that you have in between. So you prefer to be in here more doing more lectures?
IE	Yeah, because we're paying more. I think we should have more lectures and more seminars. I know that the lectures here are quite different to Malaysia's. Malaysia's are fully scheduled Monday until Friday. Sometimes, Saturday you have to go to the university again or even Sunday. I know that some of our friends, that have to go back to the university on Sunday again. But here, my first year – ok there are quite many classes Monday to Thursday. But maybe just one or two classes in a day. And for final year there is only 3 day classes. They say it's quite relaxing. And then the teaching study is giving you more time to explore yourself, do more study but for us, as international students, and maybe we still couldn't adapt to here and the teaching methods and we don't know how to explore more. I won't say anything but me myself and then I won't to take the time do more readings.
DH	It's difficult to motivate yourself when you've got a day and you've only got one seminar at 10am and the rest of the day – there's nothing.
IE	Yeah, we have to rush to the class at 9am. Ok – 10am finished. That's finished, no more class.
DH	I can understand that, I can. Have you ever had any problems or any issues with the university that you've been really unhappy with? you mentioned maybe lecturers there not going to class, and thing like that. Have you ever had any real problems?
IE	Real problems – actually everything's still fine, I think so. Maybe as a university student the lecturers expect us to be the same standard with local people. The will expect us to have the same, they expect us to write in the exams 3-4 pages, they say, is for question and then....

DH	In the same time as an English.....
IE	The same time as the English person, yeah.
DH	Do you think there maybe some allowance there to factor in that this is not your first language. Maybe you should get a bit longer, or something like that. If you were unhappy about something, be it the lecturers or you supervisor or even the library, what sort of things do you think you could do about it? Who could you go to talk to about your problems?
IE	I don't know, actually. I've done nothing.
DH	You've done nothing. Do you have a course leader? Or a programme leader?
IE	Yes, I have. But absent all the time about problems here. Because they look quite fierce, I don't dare to even like talk to them. I still remember my first year – there is some want to complain about some of the lecturers, because in the first year there is a lecturer and he looked very polite to us – the international students – and then, suddenly when we have questions to ask maybe we don't understand about what this is? – can you explain it to us again? "What," he will say "come on. I have explained in the class. If you don't know, ask those who know."
DH	Well you were.
IE	I'm asking him. He's just like very angry with us that time. Just like "It's our job to do the further reading to understand ourselves, not come in to see me asking for answers. No way. You have to do it yourself." And we don't understand about our assignments. He will say "come on, you're not expecting me to tell you the answers, OK. Go and explore yourself or discuss with other people."
DH	How did you feel about that?
IE	Quite bad. Because at first he was very nicely to us like "how do you feel today? You're very good. Are you improving your study? Yeah. Very nice." And suddenly turned into an evil "Do everything yourself. No. Don't come to me to ask these kind of stupid questions."
DH	It's very strange. So, did you talk about that with the other students?
IE	Yeah, our whole group.
DH	So, you just talked about it and had a bit a bitch about it and...
IE	Yeah, just keep it in ourselves. That's it.
DH	Do you ever think you would go and complain face to face to lecturer?
IE	Uh huh.
DH	Do you ever think you would feel comfortable talking and complaining to a lecturer?

IE	No. I wouldn't complain. Yeah. I won't complain to him.
DH	Why is that?
IE	I don't know how to complain. I don't know what to say. But if back in Malaysia, it would be easier for me because I'm using my own language to complain, yeah. There's this once in my college time, there's suddenly rakes up the fees for the SM? The charge something like SM fees. And then just like the first year we charge only \$10 for the whole exams and suddenly the second year we have to pay \$10 for each exams. Complaining "why we have to pay that much for the exams. Wasn't that our tuition fees, that includes everything." So we just shout loudly.
DH	So, you went and talked to them there.
IE	Yeah. Get signatures of all the students and then go to them, talk to them, complain to them.
DH	It's not an easy thing to do, is it? Because lecturers can be seen as people in positions of authority so it's not easy to question them, I don't think. I never found it easy.
IE	Yeah. You had to be like student representative.
DH	You've mentioned – that was my next question. Have you got student representatives on your course here?
IE	Yes, there are.
DH	Are they English or are they Malaysian?
IE	For the first year it was English, and in second year they have another one Malaysian student.
DH	What do you understand that they do? What is their role, these student reps?
IE	I think they should be collecting our problems and talk to the programme leader or what, and then to talk about how to solve the problems among themselves. Like they find another way. But, it is like, useless.
DH	Yeah?
IE	Yeah, because nothing happens. Students have student representative elected, just for their CV. That's it. Just another post for you and you just carry a post and you are doing nothing.
DH	Have you ever talked to your student representative?
IE	No.
DH	There'd be no reason to because they wouldn't help. That's a shame. If you were going to, we've talked about language already which is a very interesting area, if you were going to tell a member of staff that you were unhappy, would you prefer to do it in a conversation? Or would you maybe prefer to write a letter? Or email? You know, the different ways you could do that, how would you feel most comfortable?
IE	Let me think what ways I might use. I would prefer to

	talk to them face to face. Yeah, maybe some of the problems is quite.... I would prefer to talk to them face to face to talk about the problems in more detail because I think it's like sometimes you are writing and you will forget something. Maybe somebody will misunderstand your language or what and what you are trying to express. So if they're talking face to face, then they understand you more easier.
DH	And you can clarify any misunderstandings or anything like that. Do you ever talk to your family back home about any of the problems you've had?
IE	Everything.
DH	How do they feel about that? Especially they may pay a part of your fees. Do they get angry?
IE	Not really. Just stay the same. Maybe just make a few times when I talk to them and after that – back to normal.
DH	Do they ever give you any advice? Do they say "you should go and talk to this person or....?"
IE	No, no. They don't know anything about this year, because they've never been to university before so they don't know what kind of persons you should approach to or what.
DH	Right, that's pretty much all the questions I wanted to ask so unless there's anything you want to say or anything?
IE	No.
DH	Before I turn this off, I just want to register my thanks and how grateful I am to you for taking the time to come along, so thank you very much for that. And just to reiterate some of the ethical issues again, if you reflect on this interview and you would prefer this data didn't count towards my PhD, then you are more than welcome to withdraw from the research. Obviously, I hope that doesn't happen but if you are, you're available to do that. If you've got any queries, you can just contact me.
IE	I think its fine.

Date:	Thursday 21 st June	Key:	
Venue:	Drill Hall Building	DH:	David Hart
Interviewer:	David Hart	IG:	Interviewee H
Respondent:	Interviewee H		

DH	<p>Well thank you very much for agreeing to come along today. Before we start, I just have a number of points I need to cover to make sure I am addressing the relevant ethical issues. What the interview is about is an elaboration of the survey you will remember completing a few months ago. Firstly, the interview will be about your time in the UK and how you have adapted to living in another culture. And the second is to find out a little more about your behaviour as a consumer and as a student - basically building on the questions from the survey. May I remind you at this stage that you were of course selected at random for this interview – you were not selected deliberately based upon your responses to the survey. We'll have this discussion nice and informal, and feel free to take a drink at any time if you need to. On an ethical level I require you to sign on of these ethical forms, which highlight the purpose of this research and confirm your rights as a participant. There are two of these to sign – one for you to keep so you have my personal contact details, the other is for my records. (Signatures taken on both forms) In line with the ethical guidelines, none of these questions have been designed to be too sensitive or offensive, but if at any point you feel there is a question you don't want to answer please let me know and that is fine. Also if you feel you are not enjoying the interview then you are free to leave the room at any time. That's not your right as a participant. Please feel free to ask any questions if you are unsure at any point. When this interview is written up your name will be removed from the transcription so you will not be attached to the data – you will simply be known as Interviewee A or interviewee B etc. Lastly, this interview will be typed up by a colleague of mine – only myself and this colleague will hear this transcription. If you wish to see a copy of this transcription at a later date then simply send me an email and I will happily pass it on to you. Aside from that the only people who will actually see the transcript will be my supervision team. Does everything seem OK before we start? Are there any questions?</p>
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IH	No, no
DH	First of all I just want to find out a little bit about the course you are on, you're doing the MA in Education?
IH	Yes, it's at Coach Lane Campus
DH	So how did you get involved in Education?
IH	Because I am a teacher in my university in China, so I wanted to further my study for my academic career, so I chose Northumbria
DH	Is your university at home a partner of Northumbria
IH	Yeah, it's a partner, a joint programme
DH	So how are you finding the course?
IH	Good, cause the course, Northumbria is famous for teaching and learning and this is the area that I am really interested in. The teachers are very supportive, very nice, yeah.
DH	So you are currently doing your dissertation?
IH	We are doing our last assignment and last exam, and then we finish this month and will start my dissertation for the whole summer holiday
DH	And when is that due to be submitted?
IH	In September, 24 th
DH	And at that point, you may be going home, you may be staying, it depends on the outcome of the interview you have had today?
IH	Yeah, I hope to do a PhD, another three years
DH	So you are obviously happy to leave the teaching for three years to get the PhD?
IH	Yeah, because it will give me more time to think and reflect, and to do more reading I think
DH	And I suppose taking a Masters or a PhD back home will give you a big advantage in the job market?
IH	No, that maybe is the case ten years ago, but now especially Masters from Britain, because only one year people don't trust about this. And also we have many university students in China now because we have the mass education, the Higher Education, many students graduate, they find no job. So it's hard, it depends – if you have the ability you can find a good job. But a degree come from here will help you, because you have the advantage in language as well as the more colourful cultural awareness
DH	How long had you taught in China?
IH	In fact I worked for eight years, but at the very beginning I am an interpreter, since 2004 I have been a lecturer
DH	So you enjoy lecturing?
IH	Yes I do like teaching, I enjoy teaching, working with the students
DH	What courses did you teach on?
IH	Listening, English. Listening, comprehension, stuff like

	that
DH	The next lot of question I will come onto is your adaptation. So I am right in thinking that you have been here since around September last year. Before you came, how did you feel about moving here?
IH	Excited, er nervous because you are not quite sure about how hard the course will be, so I tried to read more textbooks before I came here (laughter)
DH	So were you worried about language issues or anything like that? Or cultural issues?
IH	In fact language is not a problem, it's not a great concern to me because I studies language for a long time and also lecturing in English so no problem with my.... But I worry about like the assignments, examination, the assessment procedures here. I worried about that, but now I feel easy, I got many distinctions. I don't know about my dissertation but I am trying to write a good one, hope I can get distinction
DH	Had you ever been to the UK?
IH	Yeah, only one time
DH	So how was it, was it scary when you first moved here?
IH	In fact because my husband is also a student here, in the School of Computer, so we just support each other. We do feel lonely here, but two people are better than just one, so we support each other emotionally
DH	So did he start in September as well?
IH	Yes, he had a term of English training and he started his Masters in January and will finish next year
DH	If you don't mid me asking, was his decision to come here because you were coming here?
IH	Yeah, I think when I told him I wanted to go to UK to further my education, he said "Go, and I will go with you" so we quite the job and we come here. Very supportive. And when I told him I wanted to do the PhD, he said "Do it, I will support you"
DH	So he obviously quite likes it here?
IH	Yes, he in fact enjoys his course maybe more than I do because his course is more colourful. Like for example last month I just had to do several assignments, but he got to do presentation, group work, project and interview clients and do the report so he really enjoyed it
DH	It's good that it's worked out for both of you and not just one. Did you do a great deal of planning before you moved over here?
IH	In fact it's in a rush, because we got the offer then we apply for the visa, it take me about several months for me to get the visa. My husband got his visa 5 days before the flight, so, hurry, in a hurry
DH	So you didn't have a great deal of time to think about

	what life might be like over here
IH	No, no we just, because we are too busy with the documents. I didn't use an agent, I applied myself, so writing the documents and show the certificate to the embassy, horrible
DH	That's a lot of paperwork....
IH Yeah. Yeah, we can't understand why, the procedures. We have the money and we want to do the degree here, why not just let us? (Laughter)
DH	Now that you have been here nearly a year now, do you feel you have changed a great deal?
IH	In fact life here is easy; I think in China you care more about other colleagues, you have the stress for your working. But here it's easier because you're only a student. At the very beginning we don't like here, we didn't like here because we feel lonely and because of you know the price, the living standard is much higher. And also the weather because in Winter, strong winds, everyday. But now we like it, especially during the Summer
	(Laughter)
IH	In my city its 39 degrees, centigrade, horrible
DH	And that's horrible....
IH	We really enjoy the weather here, the fresh air, in our city its polluted
DH	What sorts of things do you o n your spare time?
IH	I go swimming and the gym in the City Pool, and also we walk a lot and talk to friends. We miss home, the Chinese students will gather together and make food
DH	Funnily enough that was the next thing I was going to ask you about was food. Do you still eat Chinese food?
IH	Yeah, Chinese food, because at the very beginning I had a lot of British food, pizza, cake, chocolate.... I put on two stones in six months. So now we cook every day, cook Chinese food, and I like Chinese food maybe more healthier. But British food is also delicious, I am trying to learn Shepherd's Pie? Sundays Dinner, and Yorkshire pudding
DH	I am getting hungry now! But your preference is still for Chinese food because it's healthier....
IH	Yeah, healthier, and you will think about home, and you can lose weight
DH	Can you remember your very first few days on the university campus up at Coach Lane? How did you find those?
IH	Very exciting you know, first I feel.... That the service here is very helpful. I have the induction and lecturer tell us how to adapt to the life here, and we also have the welcome party and we learnt dancing. My husband and I

	also joined.... International Student Committee?
DH	The society?
IH	Yes, like the society, there are some volunteers, they help us, my partner here is a home student, she helped me a lot. She showed me around the City and invited me to the Halloween party, and I also invite her into my home for Chinese New Year. So I really enjoyed the program and we also joined the Volunteer Group in SU and do some volunteer work like for the MacMillan Cancer Research, so the first time I get the cake and go round the bar and ask people to donate money "Give me the money, you can have the cake". So the experience, it's very exciting, its new experience to me, and my husband and I were awarded Northumbria Plus Award. I think it's Peter... the vice-chancellor
DH	Peter Slee?
IH	Yeah of Northumbria University, he gave us the award, oh very excited, and take pictures
DH	So that was in recognition of the things you have been involved in?
IH	Yeah, because we, you have to do more than 30 hours volunteer work. In fact my husband and I think that that's a way we can get involved in this society, have a better understanding of the culture here, and to enrich our learning experience here. I really find this beneficial, so next year if I continue to stay here I will volunteer for both groups
DH	I can tell from this you like to be busy?
IH	Yes
	(Laughter)
DH	So the MA that you are currently studying, how many students are there?
IH	Six
DH	Only six....
IH In fact seven, but one disappear, we have never met him again
DH	Are the other students English or are they international students?
IH	Oh, international students, two from Cyprus, four from China. I mean two from Mainland, two from Taiwan, so six students. It's nice, small group, you can have a discussion
DH	That's good. So are you quite a close group?
IH	Yeah, quite close. Four Chinese, we have our own language, next year I will move out with them, and two girls are from Cyprus and we are also very good friends, support each other and celebrate birthdays together. Because it's such a small group you have the chance to know each other – not like China. In my class we have

	63 students, so I can't name their name after one term (Laughter)
DH	And do you feel you get on with the Cypriot students as well as you get on with the other Chinese students?
IH	Mmmm, yes. Although sometimes we can't understand each other, in another language. But because all of us are young and open-minded and talk to each other
DH	You keep doing something really clever – you keep touching on the question I am going to ask next! Your living arrangements – you mentioned you are moving soon, but where do you and your husband live now?
IH	On campus, Coach Lane
DH	Is that for just two people? Do you share with anyone else?
IH	No, small flat for two people
DH	So how do you find that?
IH	Yeah, nice flat, but very expensive. Coach Lane is quiet, fabulous place. I like Coach Lane
DH	So why are you and your husband choosing to move in with your course mates?
IH	Because next year we have to move out, they only provide rooms for first year students so we have to move out. They are looking for roommates, so we move with them. And maybe for students coming from one country share the same culture it is easy to get along with them. And no partying, no pub, no alcohol
DH	From the early interviews I have done it seems that many students struggle to understand the pub culture that we have in the UK. Would you have considered living with any UK students?
IH	In fact if you live with, I find English students are oh so friendly to me, but sometimes because of the culture and the food, and sometimes they just leave the dishes in the.... Because I did that too. When you are busy, rush to the classroom
DH	So you think it will be a lot better living with people from the same culture?
IH	Yeah but, in fact we don't have many more choices. If we can live with home students its good, and we can practice our English, and know the culture and learn from each other. But it's not easy I have found to get involved with them, and you will find many Chinese students they share one house, many home students they share one house
DH	Obviously we have mentioned language and you seem very confident in your language ability....
IH No! Yes I am confident before I come here, but since I come here I found it hard to.... Sometimes you can't find the exact word to express your feeling, and many of

	my English are 'Chinglish' – sometimes, well practice, practice.
DH	So how often would you say you speak English? Obviously in class....
IH	Yeah in class we speak English, But when we talk to Chinese students we will use Chinese, and at home sometimes Chinese. But because my husband is working hard to improve his English, so he sometimes speaks English with me
DH	So you try your best to improve it?
IH	Yeah I try my best, but I find my English not improved I think. Improved in writing, because in China I use English in the class every day, but here because we don't have many classes and most of the time we are writing, so I think my writing skill is greatly improved, but my spoken English, hmmm, maybe improved
DH	From this I imagine that you have not had a great deal of interaction with English students?
IH	No
DH	Do you feel they make you feel welcome here?
IH	Hmmm, yes. I think I joined the group, volunteer group, the home student are very nice to me and especially my partner – she is a volunteer and she helped me a lot. But for other students, no we just say hello to each other before we meet on campus, or only some students who are interested in Chinese culture will say something Chinese to us. "Wow!". In fact I found British people very friendly, they can say hello to you, but they always keep distance I found. You can't be too close
DH	Would you like to have closer relationships with English people?
IH	Yes f I can. In fact that's one of my purpose to come here, to know the culture. In fact if we can find a home-stay then maybe we will choose to live with the family. Sometimes it's the privacy – in Chinese culture people close, very close, maybe because of the huge population, crowded together, very close
DH	Are you happy with how you have settled into life here?
IH	So far, yes
DH	There's nothing you would change about your life here?
IH	Change? No. Maybe if I can get the studentship here and do the PhD here, I would have to change to another university
DH	Would you be keen to stay in the UK at a university?
IH	I think probably the UK because the US and UK the two countries have very good education, the reputation is very good. To go to America? Probably no, because my husband will graduate next year so I have to wait for him. But after I got my PhD I will go back to China.

DH	You know that definitely?
IH	Yeah because this is not your country.... You are strangers in fact here. You will miss home, and China is developing very quickly and when I come here I know much I love my country. Before that you always criticise your country, when you come here you find I am very lucky I come from China. No war
DH	You mentioned that you have felt lonely? When do you feel like this?
IH	I still feel that you have some problem you want to talk to your friends, a problem you don't want to talk to your husband, then you miss your friends in China, old friends. So each month I spend a lot of money on telephone, on calling my Mom, my sister, my brothers. Because I come from a large family, I have a sister and two brothers. I am the youngest child and they all are very kind to me. At home my sister helped me a lot, with cleaning, with everything, always cooked for me. You will miss them, yeah.
DH	What sort of things do you tell them about England
IH	They will ask "Are you all right? Pay attention to your health, do exercises". Then they will ask about my study "Is it all right, is everything going well?", but seldom tell them about bad things you know. Unhappy, I won't tell my Mom, just say "Everything is fine"
DH	So why is that?
IH	You don't want people to worry about you, and in fact they can't do any help. Only they start to worry so no good, and something will be better – at the very beginning you thought it a disaster, but later you found oh....
DH	What are the key things you have learned about yourself or in general since you've come here?
IH	I think its first the lifestyle – people here they work very slowly, slower than we do in China, so they enjoy their life, and I find in China people care too much about their jobs, their career, their social status. But here maybe because of the weather system is very good, even in China if you are a Governor you won't be, how to say, over here a Governor would buy their own house, and when they leave work they go to the pub or do exercises. To people the most important thing is not the money, but the quality of the life you have, so after I go back to China, I probably, hopefully, I won't care about those things that worried me before
DH	So you will take some of the things you have learned from our culture back home?
IH	Yes, I think my idea totally changed about life I think, everything else.... Because you meet many people from many different countries, you need to get along with

	them. It's not easy I think to get along with people
DH	Thank you for that, some interesting points there. What I want to move on to now is your behaviour as a consumer in general at this point. Firstly, have you had any bad experiences with companies in your time in the UK?
IH	In the shop or....
DH	In anything
IH	No, the only thing is about the school bus that I am not satisfied with the service.
DH	Is that the university....
IH Yeah the university. According to the timetable it says the last one will be 21:30, but I waited for several times now they didn't come. And they always use a small bus for so many students, very crowded. And you in Coach Lane you know there are very many Egyptian teachers, they have nothing to do but go shopping all day, so they will occupy it. It's very crowded, very hard, you know sometimes you will have some urgent thing to do, for a lecture or something. So I am not satisfied about school bus. For other things, no I found people here are very nice, for instance I go to swimming pool the assistant there taught me English word each day, one each day. The first one is 'gym' because I said I want to go to fitting room. Nooooo! That's interesting
DH	So you have had no problems, for example setting up a bank account, mobile phones?
IH	No, they are very nice to us, and very patient because we are international students, they know our first language is not English so they are very patient. No I don't think so. Everything is OK. Oh, one thing is about the.... Metro, because we seldom use Metro, because I think someone told me that on Sunday one ticket can be OK for two people. But we don't know its Day Saver, so we bought one single ticket to meet our friends, but then some officers come and said "No, you have to pay £20". We said "Why because it's a Sunday we buy one ticket for two people". He said "No, it must be Day Saver". So we don't know those rules, and we write a complaint letter but no response so we have to pay the money. And one of my friends no battery for his laptop, because he needs to use it so he charges it in a shopping mall. Later the policeman came. Yeah he has a problem and he write all his details down. He said that's the rules. So I think when we have an induction maybe the university give international students some rules, like maybe for home students, because they were born here, grown up here no problems, but to strangers like us we don't know that. And it will give the bad feeling that "Oh, you're Chinese, you will want to take

	advantage of that” or something. In fact, my husband and I just donated £5 each to join a walk sponsored by MacMillan research group, and if we want to take advantage we wouldn’t buy any tickets
DH	Or you wouldn’t do charity work....
IH	Yeah, so it give me the feeling that we want to take advantage, but no. When you are in foreign country they will say “You are Chinese, you did what” give you the feeling that you, bad feeling I think
DH	When you were on the Metro do you think they should have accepted that you did not understand the tickets and been more understanding?
IH	They said they were signs on the ticket machines but we didn’t see that....
DH	So you wrote a letter?
IH	Yeah I wrote a letter, and no response. It’s OK, long time ago
DH	So how did you feel about not getting a response and having to pay the £20?
IH	Angry, you know, I complained to the Metro office, they said no they were just to collect the money. They said I need to write the letter to the address, but nobody answered. Disappointing
DH	But you’ve moved on now?
IH	Yes, you break the rule you need to pay the punishment, but sometimes it’s unfair because, always just want to let them know that we don’t want to take advantage
DH	One of things Britain is known for is being open to people returning products, for example if some clothing is the wrong size. Have you ever had to do anything like that?
IH	Yeah I bought a bag in Christmas in Marks and Spencer. For about seven days later the strap has broken, but I went there and I want to change it, they said the bags were only for the sale, but they give me the money directly. Normally I will go to Marks and Spencer to buy things, because I think the better service. I also feel Next is good.
DH	Do you think a shop in China would have done the same thing in the am situation?
IH	Er, in fact in China if you want to return something they will ask you first the receipt, and then they will ask you many questions, and normally.... I come from a small city, normally after you buys the things they won’t return it
DH	How would companies back home react if you complained?
IH	In China? Sometimes, like if you have dinner in a restaurant, something you are not satisfied you will

	argue with the waiter or waitress. If they can't solve the problem they will ask the manager to see you, and some managers are OK. They can change the dish. Some don't. It depends on what kind of company – if big company, they care about their reputation, they will return your product
DH	So when things go wrong, do you talk to friends and family a lot about those sorts of things?
IH	Yes I would tell friends I bought something in that shop and it didn't last long or something, I will say that
DH	Why do you do that?
IH	You don't want your friends to make the same mistake. You will say "Don't go there". Yes we do that in China, some friends will tell me "Don't go to that restaurant". We like to talk to friends, to inform everyone
DH	So back home in China, how do you think they will react if they had a problem with a company, with a restaurant. Would they behave in a way like you do?
IH	Mmmm, some more aggressive, I think, quarrel with them. Like my sister, and she's more strict, she will quarrel. It depends. Some friends say we won't quarrel with you but next time we won't come here again
DH	Going back to the Metro example, I am very surprised that they didn't react – how do you feel they should have reacted to that?
IH	I think at least they should write a letter to us that we understand your situation or something, because in this letter we said we don't.... we write this letter to let you know, to give you some suggestions, and maybe you can let the university know when the international students come, they can give a lecture on these rules or something. We also say that we will pay the money because someone broke the law, the rules and you need to pay the money, but they didn't answer and at least they should say we feel bad about it but it's our rule to pay the money. Next time we will pay attention to that and maybe collaborate with the university or something like that
DH	Just to show that they are listening to your suggestions
IH	Yeah, maybe just send me an email saying we forgot that. I don't know if.... Maybe they are too busy.
DH	So when you write to the company you didn't so it with the idea of getting your money back?
IH	In the letter, we didn't say we want the money back, no. We just say, we want them know, and tell them we really don't know about that, we don't want to take advantage
DH	Do you feel that it is more appropriate to complain to a company in the UK than it is in China?
IH	Chinese people are more tolerable in fact. I mean....

	Once things happened, we always try to avoid the conflicts. We say "OK, OK, OK, OK" and harmonious very important to our society. But you will find that here you can be strict to the manager or something. In fact if you make a complaint in a restaurant or in a supermarket here, people are very friendly to you
DH	Maybe they are more used to this sort of thing happening. OK, the last few questions I have are building on what we have just discussed and focusing on the university. It will be interesting for you in particular because you are a lecturer but now a student here. Do you feel like you are a student of the university or a customer?
IH	Yes sometimes my class mates will say "We pay our tuition fee, it's our right to receive a high quality teaching here". Sometimes we will have that kind of feeling, but when we get along with our lecturers I never feel that I am the customer. Because some of my lecturers are very supportive, they have helped me a lot. I think some things is more important than money.
DH	Do you feel that you have the right to criticise the university if they have done something wrong or if you're ever unhappy?
IH	Yes if I have time I will join in every questionnaire, I will fill in every questionnaire they send to me. These days I am too busy. I think they try to give each international student a questionnaire about the service here. I don't know about the result – maybe they should write a report on that and publish on the website, tell the students. But I don't know about other students, what are their opinions?
DH	You mentioned before the problems you had with the minibus – are there any other things in the university that you have had problems with in the past?
IH	(Pause) I think only the problems with the bus
DH	You have had no problems with the teaching or anything like that?
IH	Teaching, because it's hard to adjust the teaching to meet every student's needs so it's controversial. Some students think it's good, some think its bad, so it's hard to say. But because the teachers are supportive we think we can learn it ourselves. I think attitude is very important
DH	If you ever were unhappy with a part of the university, what sorts of things do you think you could do about it?
IH	My class mates, just to complain, but I tried.... In fact we had a research module, I think because of some financial problem they asked the education students to do it with the health students. The teacher is fabulous, is very good. He is from an education background, He tried

	to use some examples in education area, we really appreciate that, but we do hope that we can have our own research module where we can learn more about educational research methods. So I am also representative, a student representative, so I joined some meeting and complained about that. I don't know about next year, maybe next year they will give lecturer, especially when my assignment – I chose seven modules and I got distinctions, only in these two research modules I got very bad mark, so we will feel more upset
DH	It is interesting that you mentioned being a student rep, as that is accepted as one of the avenues available to students if they are unhappy. I know your course is small, but do you get people talking to you, saying could you mention this to lecturers?
IH	In fact before the meeting, I always try to talk to my group members, whether they have any problems or something. But in fact I have already got the information because we always discuss together so I think I know the problems, and I will say something
DH	So do you think that the lecturers take these complaints and suggestions seriously?
IH	Yeah they will write them down in the minutes, show you next time. But maybe because Education is a small group, our voice is weak. Yeah if we have more international students then maybe the university will pay more attention to us because too small and #whispers# no profit #end whispers#
	(Laughter)
DH	Obviously the university have both academic and non-academic members of staff. Would you have different feelings complaining about these different groups of people?
IH	I like to talk to my tutor, my supervisor, they all.... They will listen to me, sometimes you just need a listener, to listen to you. Maybe they can't give you too many suggestions, but they will support you emotionally. In fact I find I try to get more support because I always try to book tutorial with tutors, and on email they will answer all of my emails no problem
DH	So you feel able to talk to them about your problems?
IH	Yeah, yeah, my life
DH	When you are interacting with these tutors, do you prefer to do it face to face, or perhaps by email?
IH	Face to face, yeah
DH	Why?
IH	Because when you talk you can show other ways to show your feeling, tears, gestures, but when you write maybe it's hard to express your ideas clearly

DH	So when you write your letter to the metro, why did you choose to write to them?
IH	Because sometimes you can't meet them all the time, some teachers are part-time, so it's hard to arrange a time, so write them on desktop anywhere. They will reply to me each time
DH	Just to close, back home in China do you think it is seen as acceptable to complain to lecturers?
IH	At China, many of my students are my friends. They will tell me many things, not only about their coursework, but also their personal life or things like that. Now I am here they also send me emails
DH	So are complaints common back in China?
IH	Yes, yes, but maybe because you have so many students. Like I have 63 in one class and I have three classes. So in fact sometimes you don't have time to answer all of their questions, but if they sent me email and ask me, I will tell them
DH	OK, IG, those are pretty much all of the questions I had to ask you today, so than you very much for all of your thoughts, your answers, your experiences, they are all very useful. Especially after the interview you have just had! Before I turn the tape off, just to reiterate that if you have any problems please feel free to get in touch. If you want to see the interview transcript then that's fine, just send me an email

Appendix I: Example Interview Summaries

Respondent D Interview Summary

Overall impression of the interview: The respondent was open and prepared to share experiences in the interview, however a key obstacle was helping the respondent understand what was meant by 'dissatisfactory experiences' or 'complaining'. This is clearly a semantic issue that needs to be addressed in future interviews, as this may result in missing respondent's dissatisfactory experiences.

Theme One: Student Acculturation

6 Quickly highlighted that the course he is studying is at a more advanced level than available back home:

"I would say that the lecturers over here are very aware of their own subjects, how to teach their students, how to direct them to the path, they really know how to deal with all of these problems. Back in Malaysia I think it's quite a problem because they're not quite familiar with the subject like over here, they are not trained to do some of the subjects".

The respondent seems to enjoy the variety of lecturers and scale of the university compared to home:

"In my home town it's just a college, in one building. So we just go to the class, every day the same class. Same room all the time, and then sometimes it's the same lecturer for two subjects. I have to see him four times a day – oh shit"

1 There was obviously a real pressure to succeed at university, not only for the respondent but also so as not to let down his parents. This involves changing his study style to suit the UK method of teaching.

There appears to have been some disagreement as to whether the respondent should come and study in the UK with the parents having a significant influence:

"they asked me if I want to come and then they urged me to come. But I had my own personal reasons not to come actually, so there's some struggle inside there. But still I decided to come over to experience Western life over here".

3 Again, student reminisced over feelings of excitement and curiosity when first moving here; there was very little fear about what may happen.

"I just get used to it and adapt. The moment I get here I just find how to use this bank account. There's nothing much to worry about for me".

"I think that's for other people to see, I'm not sure if I really changed. Maybe the way of my thinking has changed".

7 Is part of a very small course of five with only one local student, so as a consequence many of his friends are also international students. This problem is compounded by the fact that he lives in halls with fellow Chinese students (which causes the respondent to laugh).

7 Disappointment was expressed as to the lack of local student in his accommodation:

"I didn't get to choose. I am just surprised that oh, everybody's Chinese – I thought I would be staying with the locals over here.... Yeah, maybe to brush up my communication skills. I think it's a good idea, but then I don't get it".

4 Certainly prefers cooking Chinese food, indeed has some trouble defining what English food actually is. Strangely has no problem with the cold weather.

5 The first day in the UK was particularly difficult for the respondent:

"Well the first day that I come here its quite difficult for me. I didn't have any blankets and pillows on the first day, because I arrived quite late that time, around 5 o'clock in the evening, so even if I go to the City Centre everything is closed.... Yeah, I have to use the, you know those jackets for Winter time, to cover myself"

3 Tries to speak in English as often as possible to brush up his skills. However acknowledges that such opportunities are quite limited in the university and particularly in the halls.

The Christian Fellowship has enabled the respondent to practice his English with local people, but despite preferring to write in English he still lacks some confidence:

"Not quite confident actually. Yeah, even when I'm talking to you maybe I have some words that I cannot speak out; I don't know what word I should use, something like that".

Membership of the Christian fellowship has enabled the respondent to access people who have settled down in the UK for a longer period.

"I think that the university, the accommodation part, should have arranged a mixture of locals and international students, rather than everyone from China – everyone is Chinese inside the flats. So I think that's a problem.... Separation".

8 Overall, the respondent appears satisfied with life in the UK despite the lack of contact with local students. He admit to occasionally feeling lonely but speaks to people back home every week, preparing them for UK life so when they visit it will not be shocked.

2 Feels that a major cultural difference is that people in the UK are open-minded whilst back home people are more conservative.

".... Yeah, always drink beer – everywhere I go there is beer, beer and beer. I'm not fond of drinking beers"

Theme Two – Consumer Complaint Behaviours across Cultures

9 *"Well if it's just cheap then I think I wouldn't mind, but if it's expensive then I think I will make a complaint over it"*

10 *"No, they will urge to return it and change it for another thing, the same price, may be a bit more and get a better one. They will not refund the money, unless we really want it to refund, then they may refund us"*

Sees our policy as a good thing, as it protects consumers. Also will help friends through word of mouth:

9 *"Maybe I would do that sometimes if I had a bad experience, yeah, I'll do that. Or maybe if they insist on buying that, I will just say well, beware of this and that, this and that. Check this product first.... Yeah, to make sure they don't have the same bad experience as me".*

9 Interestingly, he views the practices of offering some tangible compensation and an apology as complimentary, and in reality they should be done together as a means of alleviating angry customers:

"I think apologies it, what you call it, goes along with the exchange as well, because if a company gave us a faulty TV then they should apologise because they gave this product to us so they should apologise about it, and change for another one. It's a proper thing to do".

In terms of product switching, the respondent sees this as necessary if companies make mistakes. Equally, he feels that companies push their products on to us so it is only right that people complain and it can protect future customers.

Theme Three – Student Complaint Behaviour

14 Suggestion that colleges in a partnership with Northumbria are not as knowledgeable about the subject and simply teach students how to pass an exam rather than the subject:

“So they just teach basically using the guidelines that.... I think there are some guidelines from Northumbria. So they just teach according to what the guidelines show. Every teacher, they will basically tell which question will come up, which question will come up, and they just basically run through it and you'll be fine”.

Has had few incidents of any note that have caused dissatisfaction, but did report some problems with IT facilities in the library; once he approached a member of staff who was little help, so now just uses another computer / laptop at home.

He also cited a problem with meeting his project supervisor who missed meetings and was not available. He accepted that he was knowledgeable and good at his job, but this is no good if he does not meet with the student.

“Well actually I did, my second supervisor asked me if I had any problems with my supervisor, and I say yes I have. It's quite hard. It's quite hard to talk to him when he's not available”!

“Er, no not really. He just said well he's busy, and somehow he agrees with the lecturer, something like that. So I can't do anything, I just do what I like for my project. Just go blindly and do whatever I can”.

15 Was fully aware of the student representative system but as the course only has five students it is not really necessary. Did confess to sharing negative thoughts with flatmates and other students.

16 “I fear that maybe he will fail my paper or something like that if I do it. So I think that's a problem. With a shop the only relation between me and them I a TV that I bought so but here it's long-term and I am quite scared that it will affect my studies because of my complaints. Maybe if they didn't know who complained then that would be OK”

17 “I think I would prefer to write a letter. It's more formal. Its gets right through to the person and lets them know it's quite a serious matter for us, as a consumer or as a student. Like my girlfriend who has had a problem with the bank, with overdraft fees of £39, they charged her three times so it's quite expensive. My girlfriend just write a letter and because my girlfriends' relative is lawyer”

18 When discussing complaining about lecturers back in his home country, suggested that it is better to go for advice rather than just to complain:

16 “we never actually complained about them, sometimes we actually have to do our part first before we go to them”.

Respondent E Interview Summary

Overall impression of the interview: A free-flowing interview where the respondent was not afraid to state what they felt they had done well (academic work) and what areas they had struggled in (social relationships). Interestingly, the respondent made numerous references to their lack of English ability, when in reality they were one of the most competent interviewed.

Theme One: Student Acculturation

1 The respondent studied Quantity Surveying which was actually chosen for him by his parents, as his main interest (sports) would not help him secure a job later. Further, he chose to study in England over Australia through a desire to gain more independence – it was felt that taking a course in Australia would be the easy option given the friendship networks the respondent already has over there.

1 His parents do not even hold Western countries in a positive light:

“They don’t like western country but they will still send their children to western countries for education but they will not encourage them to stay there, to work. Like my sisters, both of them are graduating in Australia and then they’ll go back straight away after they graduate”.

6 He refers in some depth to the idea of spoon-feeding back in Malaysia, which is the preferred method for exams due to difficulties writing, but in general feels that you can learn more the British way:

“The college in Malaysia, there mostly is spoon-feeding – you know? Just give you everything. They seldom ask you to dig research about something like here you need to do assignments and coursework that you need to find extra information.... the lecture teachers pass on the notes and they what will be coming out in the exams is just like “you study this part this part, this part – OK. These are the tips. You study all of them then you will get high marks.... even if I memorised a whole paragraph exactly the same then write it down, then I can get the full marks for that part”.

2 *“I would say they are just like in the movies.... I think they are basically like that, yeah, more or less”.*

1 There were mixed feelings when the respondent first arrived in the UK:

“I was quite excited, actually. At first it is a mixture of feelings. Some scary and exciting because you’ve got the chance to go to a place that is totally – like you don’t know that place – totally a stranger for you. So, it is quite excited, yeah”.

5 *"The first few days is a very hard life because everything has to calculate because the currency is 7 times different – 1 pound is equal to 7 bahts in Malaysia – so whatever I want to buy "this is £1 is 7 – that makes it very much expensive. And then the first few days is very hard to catch the language here, the works, the language. It's very hard. Why is the English they pronounce is totally different from what I heard on TV".*

4 Like many others he prefers to cook his own Chinese food, and did mention some problems coming to terms with the weather and its unpredictability. However once he got used to the weather it was difficult to cope, with the warm temperatures when he went back home!

7 Belongs on a relatively large course of 60-70 students, however there is a small group of fellow international students most of which are from Malaysia:

"Yeah, we normally just stick in a group like that – just 15 people of us – always hang around or travelling. Just 15 of us".

"We don't really know them well. Not really close because basically, we don't have grab a chance to talk them, to know them, to make friends with them. Just, I think the only time I hang out with the English guys was on the study trip. That's the only time. That's the only moment, I think, I'm crazy with – just have some fun with the English guys".

2 Comments on how it was interesting to see what the English students do in their spare time, but finds this boring; at home they would spend time simply drinking tea and chatting, whereas here there is nothing to do but go to the pub. Even many outdoor sports like basketball are not possible because of the weather and preference for football.

5 Lived with a senior and other students who had been in the UK longer:

"It is hard for first year because there was some arguments appears between my senior and the other housemates. I was just like stuck in the middle. So, I follow. I don't know where to go. It is quite hard because there is some argument".

"In my hometown I used to live in a large room. I had my own room, massive room which is very much bigger and suddenly, come over here to single rooms, which my bed is there, the table, cupboard and after I pull out my chair, you already stick to the bed so I have literally "this" space to move".

5 The use of English again appears to be because of necessity rather than preference, and highlights difficulties of writing in English which is obviously a big problem in assessments:

"Not really, but only this year compared with last year. Because this year, I have spent some of my time applying for the jobs - the graduate jobs –

so I have some interviews or met some people that makes me speak more English compared with last year, after the class I just go back to me own language again”.

2 “Yeah. I hope so because that’s why I want to stay here to work. Just go out for some relax, have some beers, chitchatting with friends. Actually, for me it’s quite interesting to have the time to really explore what the living style is, the culture, what they really do, what they eat, what they normally, why do they like sports – like football and rugby so much. Wish to have some close friends with English guys”.

2 Feels that when compared with a big city like London life in Newcastle is more relaxed, and comments on how the older people are always polite and will stop and say hello.

7 However the English students have perhaps not done as much as they could have to make him welcome:

“A few of them. Not really. If I go into the class, there’ll just have their own friends. Afterwards, they’ll just leave with them”.

8 The respondent admits to have felt lonely during his time in the UK:

“Especially the first year. This year is very much better than the first year because I don’t have friends here. I don’t have any friends, I come here alone, I don’t have any relatives, I don’t know anybody here. I just know one or two from my college. They were here as well but I don’t know them. Like my seniors, I don’t know them as well, actually. I come and just keep in touch with them through email – I never met them before – I don’t know who they are. Everything is quite strange. I couldn’t find anyone to speak to here. Most of the time I stick with the computer”.

4 He uses the computer to maintain relationships with those back at home. When speaking t those at home, they share all manner of experience, including some minor experiences of racism that have occurred in the city centre.

Theme Two – Consumer Complaint Behaviours across Cultures

11 Immediately cited a serious case of dissatisfaction in the UK, where a mobile phone dealer essentially disappeared part way through a contract and left him and his friends with bills to pay. They even went to the Citizens Advice Bureaus but the advice they gave was relatively useless. He felt cheated by the whole thing, and the fact that he was recommended the deal by a friend was also important:

“Yeah because at first, he recommend me and then I would go for a look and check it out, because he has been using it for 1 or 2 months already and it is easier us, internationals, to get first contract here in UK because you know”.

After this he took up another contract and was again dissatisfied as the warranty didn't cover a problem with a phone after only 1 month, meaning he had to pay for a replacement. This sort of problem would not be as likely in Malaysia as the structure of the mobile phone industry is easier and there are no dealers; any problems can be directly communicated with the network. Interestingly, he started to blame himself for these repeated problems:

"But after a month, 'What?' Broken. No choice – blame myself. But I just don't understand why it can get broken so easily".

This is the sort of thing that he likes to talk to his friends about:

"Because I don't want them to be cheated. I just want ask them to don't follow my experience. If they take experience a lesson".

9 In Malaysia, the lower prices of products mean that many people will not actually try and get a refund for faulty products:

"They won't say 'oh, this is bad. I'll have to go back to the supermarket again and exchange one or get my cash back.' They will say 'it's broken. Just throw away. I'm not going to buy there again next time'. That's it.... Yeah, that's it. But here you are like 'this thing is not functioning well. I have to bring it back. I have to ask for exchange or cash back.'"

"For expensive stuff. What I mean, just now is for the food. They won't care so much for the food, if it is broken – just throw it away. But for clothes, electrical stuff – they will still complain, send it back, ask them to change ones or get a cash back".

9 Because he is from such a small town, this actually gives him and his family more power as a consumer:

"My home town is quite nice because it's a small town so everyone knows each other, so normally my family will stick to the few stores that they are friend so they just say 'OK, come on – friend. What is the price of the TV – come on, give me a discount' the person will do it a special discount for this price here".

9 The respondent seems to have some empathy with those people who have to deal with complaints:

"Yeah, I think it's very important, yeah, because no matter how the customer complains they are angry. You are working – you have to accept that. I think that this stuff is quite normal for them. Talking to the angry customer – sorry, sorry, sorry – to comfort them down first".

"I prefer to get the cash back. If they do allow me to cancel the contract and get my cash back".

Theme Three – Student Complaint Behaviour

13 *"I feel that I pay more compared with the local students, yeah. I'm supposed to be receiving more than them"*

"I just think that education is supposed to be the service and then we come here and we are already pay more for the expenses because we still have to rent house and we have to pay for the bills – everything we have to pay. And then, maybe, the tuition fees can be more expensive than the locals – it is 1.5 times more expensive. Yeah, I think the local people only need to pay about £3,000 is it?"

On the topic of whether they have the right to complain:

14 *"Definitely [have the right to complain], yeah. I think that taking a strike, for the lecturers or some of them say "oh sorry. No class next week." And the university suddenly has a holiday – it's not a bank holiday – and just some of the lecturers have taken part in the strike activity. I think that it's not our business. Our lectures cost money. Our lecture is about £100 per day".*

"I think we should have more lectures and more seminars. I know that the lectures here are quite different to Malaysia's. Malaysia's are fully scheduled Monday until Friday. Sometimes, Saturday you have to go to the university again or even Sunday. But here maybe just one or two classes in a day. And for final year there is only 3 day classes. They say it's quite relaxing. And then the teaching study is giving you more time to explore yourself, do more study but for us, as international students, and maybe we still couldn't adapt to here and the teaching methods and we don't know how to explore more.... and then I won't to take the time do more readings".

Interesting idea that perhaps the lecturers should not expect as much from them as they do of the English students:

"Maybe as a university student the lecturers expect us to be the same standard with local people. They will expect us to have the same, they expect us to write in the exams 3-4 pages".

15 In terms of avenues to voice complaints, the respondent was unaware of how to go about this.

14 Mentioned that his programme leader was quite fierce and this made it difficult to approach them, even in his first year when he had a problem with an impolite lecturer who would not help with queries:

14 *"Because at first he was very nicely to us like "how do you feel today? and suddenly turned into an evil "Do everything yourself. No. Don't come to me to ask these kind of stupid questions."*

15 But because of a lack of available channels, they just kept this experience to themselves.

18 Back at home, they collect a number of student signatures and use these to register a complaint.

15 *"I don't know how to complain. I don't know what to say. But if back in Malaysia, it would be easier for me because I'm using my own language to complain, yeah So we just shout loudly".*

15 The respondent does not have a positive view of the student representative system:

"I think they should be collecting our problems and talk to the programme leader or what, and then to talk about how to solve the problems among themselves. Like they find another way. But, it is like, useless".

"Because nothing happens. Student representative elected, that's it. Just another post for you and you just carry a post and you are doing nothing".

17 *"Let me think what ways I might use. I would prefer to talk to them face to face. Yeah, maybe some of the problems is quite.... I would prefer to talk to them face to face to talk about the problems in more detail because I think it's like sometimes you are writing and you will forget something. Maybe somebody will misunderstand your language or what and what you are trying to express. So if they're talking face to face, then they understand you more easier".*

15 Although the respondent is keen to share all experiences (good and bad) with those back home, they cannot really offer advice:

"No, no. They don't know anything about this year, because they've never been to university before so they don't know what kind of persons you should approach to or what".

Appendix J: Data Analysis Matrix

N.B. Due to size of the matrix, this has been included on the below CD.

Appendix K: Newcastle Business School Ethics Documentation

Staff Name:	David Hart
Division:	MTTM
Title of Research Project:	Understanding the impact of Acculturation on Consumer Complaint Behaviours: An analysis of Asian students in the UK Higher Education Sector.
Start Date of Research Project:	26 th September 2005

	Comments
Brief description of the proposed research methods including, in particular, whether human subjects will be involved and how.	Human subjects are to be involved in this study. Members of the International Student Body at Northumbria University (in particular, those of South East Asian origin - Chinese, Malaysian etc.) will be utilised for this research in a two stage data collection process. Initially, respondents will be invited to complete an online questionnaire, and a sample of these will be selected at a later date to participate in a one-off in-depth interview.
Ethical issues that may arise (if none, state "None" and give reasons)	This research will not be conducted with children or vulnerable adults. In terms of sensitivity, as the students will be asked about their complaint behaviours in a university setting, they will wish to keep their responses anonymous, which will be done throughout the data analysis, final thesis and any related publications.
How will the ethical issues be addressed? (if none state n/a)	The initial questionnaire will be administered online – as part of this respondents will signify informed consent by ticking a box confirming their willingness to participate. Participants of the subsequent in-depth interviews will sign an informed consent form. All participants will be made aware of the nature and purpose of the project and how their data will be used and stored. Interview participants will be allowed the opportunity to view the manuscript after the interview. All data accumulated through the data collection process will be anonymised and stored securely on the researchers' computer. University-wide consent to approach students for this research is currently being sought.

Appendix L: Example Informed Consent Form

Newcastle Business School Informed Consent Form for research participants

Working Title of Study	"Investigating the Impact of Acculturation Styles on Consumer Complaint Behaviours in a UK University"
Person(s) conducting the research	David HART
Programme of study	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research degree
Address of the researcher for correspondence	Newcastle Business School Room NB231 Northumberland Building Northumberland Road Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST
Telephone	<u>Business:</u> 0191 227 4259
E-mail	david.hart@northumbria.ac.uk
Description of the broad nature of the research	The research is looking into the complaint behaviours of international students in the higher education environment, and whether or not international consumers 'learn' to behave in a way more associated with Western consumers.
Description of the involvement expected of participants including the broad nature of questions to be answered or events to be observed or activities to be undertaken, and the expected time commitment	<p>This interview is a follow-up from the respondents' participation in an online survey between October 2006 and January 2007 (www.ukacculturation.co.uk).</p> <p>Questions will be based largely on the topics stated above but will also focus on their attitudes towards complaining in a university setting, and how successful they feel their adaptation to life in the UK has been.</p> <p>Time commitment: Participation in today's interview (approximately 45 minutes)</p>
Additional information about the research	Analysis and conclusions will be made available to participants in a summary format – this can be requested through emailing the researcher directly

Information obtained in this study, including this consent form, will be kept strictly confidential (i.e. will not be passed to others) and anonymous (i.e. individuals and organisations will not be identified *unless this is expressly excluded in the details given above*).

Data obtained through this research may be reproduced and published in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences related to the broad nature of the research detailed above. It will not be used for purposes other than those outlined above without your permission.

Participation is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time. A copy of the transcript of this interview will be available to participants within two months – please email the researcher should you wish to receive a copy.

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study on the basis of the above information.

Participant's signature

Date

Student's signature

Date

Please keep one copy of this form for your own records.

Appendix M: Peer-Reviewed Conference Papers

The following pages provide details of the various academic conferences where various elements of the PhD have been presented and discussed with fellow academics. In many cases, the comments made by academics have been used to improve the content of the final thesis.

A list of peer-reviewed conferences presented at is provided below along with a selection of accepted papers.

Conference	Title of Paper	Date	Paper Included
Academy of Marketing (Doctoral Colloquium)	"Developing an understanding of the impact of Acculturation on Consumer Complaint Behaviours: An analysis of Chinese students in the United Kingdom Higher Education Sector"	August 2006	Y
Academy of Marketing (Full Conference: Marketing of Higher Education Track)	International Student Complaint Behaviour: An exploratory study	August 2007	Y
Northumbria Conference	International Student Complaint Behaviour	September 2007	
Academy of Marketing (Full Conference: Marketing of Higher Education Track)	International Student Acculturation: How East-Asian Students Adapt To Life In The UK	August 2008	Y
Northumbria Conference (Equality and Diversity Track)	International Student Acculturation: How East-Asian Students Adapt To Life In The UK	September 2008	

Academy of Marketing (2006) Doctoral Colloquium

“Developing an understanding of the impact of Acculturation on Consumer Complaint Behaviours: An analysis of Chinese students in the United Kingdom Higher Education Sector”

The ever-changing demographic patterns of the United Kingdom place increased emphasis on organisations to understand the needs and motivations of a diverse range of consumers. In 2001, it was reported that 7.8% of the UK population were born outside of the UK, and 2.2% were born outside of the EU (National Census, 2001). Such statistics have been the catalyst for research into the importance of culture and its effect on consumer attitudes and behaviours (Nwankwo & Lindridge, 1998).

Acculturation is a concept that has been used to explain the increasingly common phenomena of cross-cultural interaction. Despite the lack of an agreed definition of the concept, a relatively straightforward explanation has been offered by Seitz (1998), seeing acculturation as: “The process of acquiring the customs of an alternative society” (p. 23).

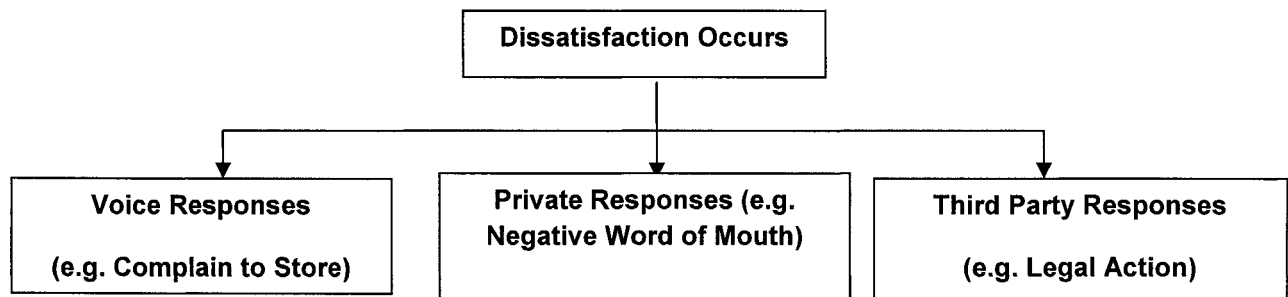
Earlier work around the concept revolved around a uni-dimensional framework, implying that acculturating individuals inevitably moved along a continuum towards the dominant culture. However, more recently researchers have accepted that whilst immigrants may choose to integrate into the host culture, they also have the choice to retain or detach themselves from their original culture. Indeed, Berry’s (1980) taxonomy is based around this assumption, outlining four potential outcomes for immigrants moving into a new culture:

	Accept Dominant Culture	Reject Dominant Culture
Retain Original Culture	Integration	Separation
Lose Original Culture	Assimilation	Marginalisation

Steenkamp (2001) has argued that research on culture has been overly simplistic, and that marketers need to learn more on the acculturation concept. Indeed, Ownbey & Horridge (1991) advocate the use of acculturation levels amongst immigrant groups as a valid means of segmentation.

Despite being applied to numerous consumer behaviour issues in recent years, research to date has not considered the potential impact of acculturation on dissatisfaction and consumer complaining behaviours (CCB). CCB has been defined by Singh (1988) as “a set of multiple (behavioural and non-behavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode” (p. 93). The same author proposed a preliminary taxonomy to explain CCB,

outlining the various options available to consumers in dissatisfactory situations:



The role of culture in understanding CCB has also been considered by academics. Liu & McClure (2001) compared the complaint behaviours of individualist and collectivist cultures, and concluded that significant differences in CCB exist between the groups (for example, private responses are more common amongst collectivists).

Despite the use of acculturation as a segmentation variable to explain marketing issues such as perceptions of advertising (Seitz, 1998), research has yet to consider the potential impact of acculturation levels on attitudes towards consumer dissatisfaction and subsequent behaviours. Indeed, Raven & Foxman (1994) commented that their own investigation into culture and CCB "skirted around difficult and unresolved issues of acculturation and the meaning of race" (p. 239).

The overall objective of this research programme is to investigate the impact of acculturation levels on attitudes towards CCB in a UK Higher Education setting. A two stage methodological approach is necessary to first identify the most appropriate interview respondents and then to ascertain their attitudes towards CCB. The chosen focus of the research is Chinese students working towards degrees at a North East University, who are likely to be characterised by differing attitudes towards CCB than those students who are originally from the United Kingdom (Thorelli, 1982).

A sequential mixed methods approach is to be utilised. Initially, respondents will complete a questionnaire to determine their level of acculturation. This scale will be developed from previous attempts aimed at specific cultural segments (such as the scale developed by Mendoza, 1989) and be tailored to reflect issues relevant to Chinese students in the UK. Respondents will be clustered into three groups (named High, Medium, and Low Acculturated) depending on their acculturation score, a technique used in previous acculturation studies in the consumer behaviour field.

The second stage will involve a random sample being taken from each of the three groups, with in-depth interviews being conducted with the selected respondents. The interviews will aim to gain a better understanding of issues such as factors most likely to result in dissatisfaction and their likely reactions to dissatisfactory incidents.

The research will be distinctive in its combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a deeper understanding of acculturation. Indeed, Nwankwo & Lindridge (1998) believed that researchers needed to go beyond purely positivist methods to fully appreciate the concept. It is hoped that the findings of this research will enable UK Higher Education Institutions to better understand the attitudes of international students with regards to dissatisfaction and tailor their response mechanisms to reflect their increasingly international student bodies.

Academy of Marketing (2007) Main Conference

International Student Complaint Behaviour: An exploratory study

Introduction

There has been much debate in recent years as to whether universities should consider students as consumers of the educational product. Arguably, increased competition from universities both at home and abroad has offered institutions little option but to become more student centred. In addition to this, students now have increased avenues to influence future applications through contributing to independent research schemes such as the National Student Survey, which will cover 148 institutions in 2007 (The Student Survey 2007).

However, Olshavsky and Spreng (1995) have suggested that an emphasis on student satisfaction is flawed. They believed that in the context of education the 'consumer' is essentially unaware of what they need from any given course and are therefore not in an ideal position to judge the university's performance.

Despite this argument, universities and researchers now consider student satisfaction as a critical factor in student retention. This may be a particularly salient issue for international students, who face numerous cultural as well as academic challenges as part of the university experience (Hellsten and Prescott 2004). Arambewela, Hall and Zuhair (2005) point out that countries such as Australia are increasing their efforts to attract students from across the globe, and suggest that UK and US universities need to focus more on student satisfaction levels to maintain their current dominance of the international student market. Further to this, Lapidus and Brown (1993) considered a combination of academic and non-academic issues and posited that on the whole international students are not satisfied with their university experience.

Previous work in the field of student satisfaction has largely focused on utilising the most appropriate measurement practices given the complexity of education provision (for example Lapidus and Brown 1993). The benefits of having satisfied customers have been widely documented in studies conducted across many product and service categories. In a university context, high satisfaction levels can lead to:

- Highly motivated students, potentially leading to improved grades (Elliot & Shin 2002);
- Higher levels of student retention, often used as a promotional tool in prospectuses (Wiers-Jenssen, Stervaker and Grogard 2002);
- Increased applications through favourable student word of mouth, especially prevalent given the emergence of the internet (Martin et al 2000);

- Favourable comparisons with competing institutions (Wiers-Jenssen, Stervaker and Groggaard 2002).

Whilst the positive outcomes of student satisfaction have been acknowledged, far less attention has been paid to the issue of student dissatisfaction and how they may react should they become dissatisfied with a university/course. This paper introduces the concept of 'Student Complaint Behaviour' as an important future issue for educational managers. It is argued that, much like in any other sector, dissatisfied students have a variety of potential responses, all of which can prove damaging to the university. Research is needed to understand what issues are most likely to lead to student dissatisfaction and how students are likely to respond in such situations.

This working paper will briefly explore the literature on consumer complaint behaviour (CCB) and explain its relevance in a university setting. A questionnaire based methodology is presented; however as the data collection phase is not yet complete any findings will not be available for discussion until Summer 2007.

Literature Review

The first CCB conference, held in the early 1980's, acted as a stimulus for much research in this previously neglected area of consumer behaviour. The practice of complaining to an organisation when dissatisfied with a product or service has become an increasingly common occurrence as a result of rising customer expectations and technological change (Cavusgil and Kaynak 1980). When conceptualising CCB, academics are keen to emphasise that the scope is broader than merely the practice of complaining directly to a store/manufacturer – it includes a wide variety of responses to dissatisfaction, all of which warrant investigation due to their potential impact on organisations (Huefner and Hunt 2000). Singh's (1988, p. 23) definition conveys this viewpoint succinctly, seeing CCB as "a set of multiple (behavioural or non-behavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode".

An early attempt to develop a framework of CCB was offered by Day and Landon (1977), who proposed a number of potential responses to dissatisfaction:

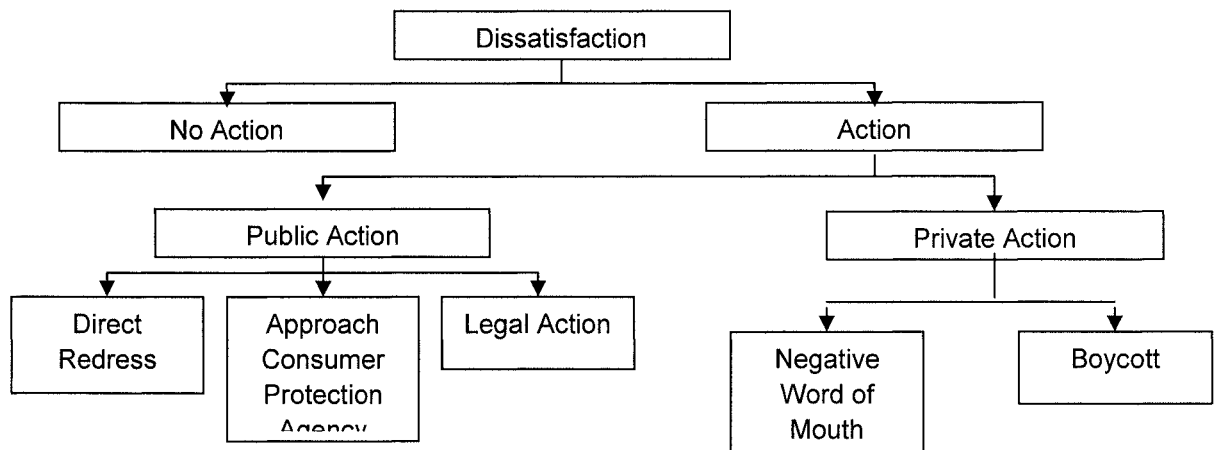


Figure 1: Taxonomy of CCB Responses (Day and Landon, 1977, p. 426).

From this point, academics (largely based in the US) have attempted to build on this model to develop further taxonomies and understand what triggers consumers to engage in these behaviours. For example, Singh and Pandya (1991) coined the ‘threshold effect’ concept, discovering that intensity of dissatisfaction was a significant determinant of consumer response. For example, small problems are likely to result in low effort responses such as word of mouth, however larger scale issues can result in multiple behaviours that even can stretch to include legal action.

Despite such work, past research has failed to consider the CCB concept in relation to students, who are faced with a number of options should they become dissatisfied with a university. Responses from students may range from discussing the issue with fellow course mates or family (negative word of mouth) through to lodging an official complaint through the Office for the Independent Adjudication for Higher Education (www.oiahe.org.uk) or even withdrawing from the university. Indeed, Aldridge and Rowley (2001, p. 57) argued that “withdrawal from a course could be viewed as an extreme form of disloyal behaviour”. This study aimed to identify the sorts of responses favoured by dissatisfied students in a variety of hypothetical situations.

The selected respondents for this study were drawn from the International student population at a North-East university for the academic year 2006/07. Specifically, the research focuses on students of East Asian origin (including Mainland China, Malaysia, and Hong Kong) as this group is of significant monetary value to UK universities, and given the collectivist culture in their home countries their responses to dissatisfaction may vary considerably.

Methods Employed

A key conceptual problem with measuring CCB is that people's dissatisfactory experiences vary across products and situations and as such are not directly comparable. In response to this, Singh (1988) has recommended the use of a 'vignette' approach, whereby respondents are presented with a hypothetical situation and asked to respond with their probability of acting in a particular way.

The Student Complaint Behaviours Survey (SCBS) was developed to understand the likely complaint behaviours of respondents in a series of university scenarios. This approach has been utilised by numerous CCB academics (for example Slama and Williams 1991). An online survey was deemed the most appropriate form of administration, owing mainly to the growing acceptance of the internet as a valid means of collecting data amongst the student population.

Bryman and Bell (2003) see the vignette technique as particularly useful when dealing with potentially sensitive issues (such as complaining about a university). The instrument starts with a non-specific control vignette which is followed by three specific vignettes, each describing a scenario in which a student may engage in any variety of complaint behaviours. These scenarios were generated from the existing literature and an exploratory focus group, and focused on the following three areas:

- A problem concerning assignment grades and inadequate feedback;
- Course organisational issues;
- Poor service from the university library.

Demographic information was captured at the end of the survey, as previous studies have suggested that age, gender and nationality have a significant impact on CCB.

Current Status of Study

As mentioned previously the data collection phase is ongoing, and due to be completed in March 2007. Consequently, no attempt has been made here to report initial findings, however these would be available should the paper be selected for presentation at AMC 2007.

Academy of Marketing (2008) Main Conference

International Student Acculturation: How East-Asian Students Adapt To Life In The UK

1. Introduction and Literature Review

Acculturation is a concept with roots in the fields of anthropology and psychology, however almost ninety years of academic research has failed to identify an agreed definition of the concept. Essentially, Steenkamp (2002) feels the concept is concerned with how individuals react to the national culture of other countries. A concise definition has been proposed by Seitz (1998), viewing acculturation as “the process of acquiring the customs of an alternative society” (p. 23).

Although use of the term acculturation has been traced back to the 1880's, it was not considered a serious political issue until the early 1900's, when the US Immigration Commission was established to monitor the cultural impact immigrants were having on the nation (Ogden, Schau and Ogden, 2004). Research in this field has grown considerably over the last 20 years, largely due to the growth of multi-cultural populations, caused by changing migration patterns and trans-national communication media (Luna and Gupta, 2001).

Initially, theoretical thinking on acculturation was based on a uni-dimensional or ‘assimilation’ perspective, whereby acquiring the characteristics of the dominant culture required the relinquishing of another (O’Guinn, Wei-Na and Faber, 1986). Also known as the ‘melting pot’ model, this approach was adopted by the US Government in the 1930's as they attempted to limit the impact immigrants would have on the nations’ cultural heritage (Ogden, Schau and Ogden, 2004). This model remained largely unchallenged until the 1960's, when nations gradually started to actively promote diversity and social scientists began referring to the concept of bi-culturalism (Alvarez and Alvarez, 2004). The assumption that individuals simply move along a continuum with the inevitable outcome of ‘assimilation’ came under increased scrutiny from academics. As Maldonado and Tansuhaj stated: “Acculturation recognises that one may not necessarily become more like the new culture” (2002, p. 414).

In response to growing criticism of the uni-dimensional approach, Canadian psychologist John Berry (1980) devised a bi-dimensional framework which has provided the platform for the majority of modern acculturation research. It was based on the notion that involvement in one culture is not dependent on involvement in another, and resulted in four potential acculturation styles available to immigrants: “Rather than assimilation, a vast typology is opened up which recognizes the cultural interests of all groups as well as the political realities in which the adaptation occurs” (Berry, 1980, p. 16-17).

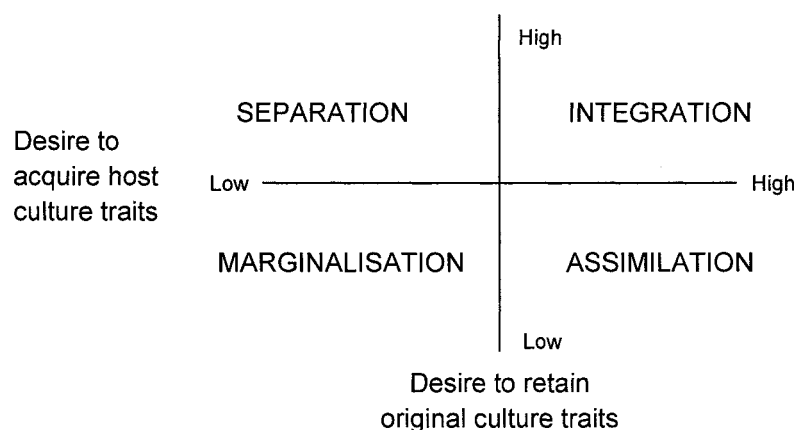


Figure 1: Berry's Bi-Dimensional Acculturation Styles (Berry, 1980, p. 14).

Despite receiving criticism for assuming immigrant choice in acculturation style, when in reality it may be imposed upon them by Government (Burton, 1996), the matrix has had "enormous influence on theory and research" in North America and Europe (Novas et al, 2005, p.22). As the bi-dimensional model is deemed particularly appropriate for bi-cultural societies and communities (Szapocnik and Kurtines, 1980) this framework is to be utilised in the present study.

2. Student Acculturation

The majority of acculturation research has focused on permanent groups of immigrants (e.g. Hispanics into the US). Perhaps surprisingly, despite the growth in the international student market over recent years, little research has addressed the acculturation of those moving between cultures for educational purposes:

"When people move from their home-culture to another host-culture for career advancement, educational or personal reasons, alterations of lifestyle frequently occur"

(Data-on, 2000, p. 428)

Indeed, an earlier study Sodowsky and Plake (1992) had argued that research was required into student acculturation because of the financial, academic and cultural contribution international students make to university life. As Feldham and Rosenthal (1990) have suggested, younger immigrants or sojourners are often torn between their original culture (which is strongly represented by old family members) and the host culture, which is visible to them through new peer groups and everyday life. Such conflict can prove stressful for an international student who is keen to maintain relationships with those back home whilst simultaneously integrating with the host society. According to Bourhis et al (1997), adapting to an unfamiliar culture and education system is complicated further when there are a wide variety of ethnic groups on one campus.

In addition to the organisational problems of enrolment and maintaining friendships with those back home, international students may also face additional difficulties including prejudice and discrimination (Lay and Safdar, 2003), language difficulties (Kogan and Cohen, 1990) homesickness (Leung, 2001) or an inability to adapt to more 'critical' approaches to teaching and learning (Butcher and McGrath, 2004).

A key issue in the acculturation of international students is their friendship networks. Koshima and Loh (2006) distinguished between mono-cultural networks (co-nationals), bi-cultural networks (including local students and staff) and multi-cultural networks (a blend of various cultures). They concluded that relationships with local students are highly valued by international students, but such relationships can be difficult to form. In an earlier study, Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977) found that international students spent more time with co-nationals and were more likely to class them as their closest friends, something which may impede their overall integration into university life.

Zheng, Sang and Wang (2004) utilised Berry's (1980) bi-dimensional framework to investigate which acculturation styles were most commonly adopted by Chinese students in Australia. Their results indicated that only around 31% of students were integrated with a similar proportion of respondents becoming marginalised. The same study also concluded that integrated students have higher levels of student well-being than their assimilated, separated and marginalised counterparts: indeed, integrated students have a more fulfilling and enriching study abroad experience (Butcher and McGrath, 2004). This suggests that universities should seek to ensure that international students retain links with their original culture whilst simultaneously interacting with others.

This study is designed to identify the most common acculturation styles adopted by East Asian students at a North-Eastern university utilising Berry's (1980) taxonomy. A knowledge of preferred acculturation styles may be useful to those university staff involved in induction processes or more general pastoral care for international students. The acculturation process may have consequences on international student retention, satisfaction levels and even academic achievement.

3. Methodology

The selected respondents for this study were drawn from the International student population at a North-East university for the 2006/07 academic year. Specifically, the research focuses on students of East Asian origin (including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam) as they represent the largest body of international students in the university, and it has been claimed that the growth in the international education market over the next two decades will be dominated by Asia (Arambewela, Hall and Zuhair, 2005). In total, there are estimated to be 2,000 East Asian students at the university.

During the process of selecting a suitable acculturation scale from the literature, many scales were deemed inappropriate because of their reliance on the somewhat dated uni-dimensional view of acculturation. The decision was made to utilise the East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM), developed by Declan Barry in 2001. The scale is a 29-item, quasi-dimensional tool – here it differs from other bi-dimensional scales as it contains 4 sub-scales, each focusing on the four styles of acculturation proposed by Berry (1980 – Figure 1). The items were generated through in-depth interviews with East Asian students and validated through a survey of a further 150 students. The scale was deemed especially appropriate due to its emphasis on language and social relationships, which the literature suggests are the two key acculturation issues for international students.

Students were contacted via the university email system and invited to part in the survey via a separate website. Participants were also required to supply various demographic data that has been linked to acculturation in previous studies (e.g. gender, age and length of time in the UK).

4. Data Analysis

A total of 125 South-East Asian students fully completed the EAAM and demographic information, resulting in a usable response rate of just over 5%. This is somewhat disappointing considering the efforts made to encourage higher levels of participation, including making the survey available in a choice of two languages (English and Simplified Chinese).

Given the potential importance of age as a determinant of both acculturation styles it was particularly pleasing to note a spread of age groups responding to the survey: 47 (38%) of respondents were aged 24 or over, with the modal age group being 22-23. There was also a reasonable spread of responses on length of the residence, with 49 (39%) reporting residing in the UK for over 1 year, and 15 (12%) reporting over 3 years. This spread of response may reflect the differing year groups participating in the study. There was a near perfect split in terms of language chosen to complete the survey – 63 completed in Simplified Chinese as opposed to 62 completing in English, justifying the decision to offer the survey in a choice of languages. Unsurprisingly given the composition of the student base at the university, 62 (49%) of respondents hail from Mainland China, with the majority of other students coming from Malaysia (22, 17%), Taiwan (18, 14%) and Hong Kong (15, 12%). Respondents were also asked to specify the faculty in which they were enrolled to study: With the exception of the Business School which contributed over half of all respondents (70, 56%), there was a reasonable dispersion of students across the remaining faculties.

Scale reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha: The overall alpha for the EAAM was 0.73, an acceptable level of reliability for psychometric instruments (Nunally, 1967) and also almost identical to the alpha score gained when the scale was originally developed and tested by Barry

(2001). Construct validity was investigated by examining correlations between the four sub-scales and seeing if the results align with conceptual thinking on acculturation (Figure 1). Weak negative correlations were found to exist between (1) assimilation and separation, and (2) integration and marginalisation. In addition, significant positive relationships are evident between integration and assimilation (.382) and marginalisation and separation (.217), mirroring the results presented when the scale was originally developed in 2001.

Figure 2 summarises the average scores for each acculturation style across all respondents, and also highlights how many adopt each style. Almost half of the respondents (46%) scored highest on the integration sub-scale, with a further 45 (37%) reporting highest scores on the separation sub-scale. The remaining acculturation styles (assimilation and marginalisation) were far less prevalent amongst the respondents, with 8% and 9% reporting these styles respectively. This divide is evident via the mean scores displayed in the second column: whereas integration and separation averages are around the 4.00 mark (possible scores of 1.00 to 7.00), assimilation and marginalisation are closer to 3.00.

Acculturation Style	Mean Score (/7)	Standard Deviation	No. reported as preferred style	Percentage (%)
Assimilation	3.23	0.26	10	8
Separation	3.91	0.99	45	37
Integration	4.18	0.57	59	46
Marginalisation	3.09	0.36	11	9
Total			125	100

Figure 2: Preferred Acculturation Styles

A full breakdown of results for individual items can be found in Appendix A. Overall, the item scoring the highest level of agreement was from the separation sub-scale: "My closest friends are Asian" which scored an average of 5.85. This was significantly higher than the next highest scoring item which scored 4.69 (from the integration sub-scale: "I have both English and Asian friends"). The lowest scoring items unsurprisingly both came from the marginalisation sub-scale: "Sometimes I feel that Asians and English people do not accept me" scored 2.63, whilst "I find that I do not feel comfortable when I am with other people" scored slightly higher at 2.66.

Spearman's Rank Order correlation was used to test for associations between acculturation scores and both length of stay and age. The results suggest that there is very little association between either age or length of stay and the four acculturation styles. The only correlations of note are weak and negative in nature: age and assimilation (-.201) and age and integration (.200), suggesting that as people get older they are less likely to adopt either of these acculturation styles. Similarly, no significant

correlations were noted between length of stay and acculturation. The most likely explanation for these results is the homogenous nature of the population from which the respondents were drawn. Only 4 of the 125 respondents had been in the UK for 5 or more years, and 118 (94%) of respondents were aged 20-30. It may be expected that had the instrument been administered in a less homogenous population that the apparent influence of length of stay would be higher. Independent Samples t-tests concluded that those completing the survey in English were likely to score higher on the assimilation and integration sub-scales, which supports previous work highlighting the importance of language usage and ability in the acculturation process. The only notable differences uncovered on gender concerned the separation sub-scale; males were more likely to adopt this acculturation style than females (mean scores of 4.1 and 3.7 respectively). A comparison of students across faculties was only of limited value owing to the sometimes small numbers of participants from certain courses. Interestingly, Law students were found to score highest on the assimilation sub-scale, possibly indicating that their study of the British legal system has led to them adapting further behaviours associated with UK culture.

5. Discussion

The number of international students adopting an integration acculturation style is positive news for university staff responsible for their wellbeing, as it shows a desire to maintain previous cultural heritage but also become involved with the local community. However the research does not address whether or not this integration process has been successful for students, and this represents a potential angle for future research: Alvarez and Alvarez (2004) have suggested that failed integration (perhaps due to racial prejudice) can result in individuals becoming marginalised from society. These above results seem to fit with previous work done on international student interaction: Round (2005) has highlighted that students tend not to integrate hugely with other international student groups. University managers may be encouraged by the fact that the marginalisation items received the lowest levels of agreement – it would be logical to presume that those feeling marginalised from the university would be the ones most likely to consider withdrawing from the university. In addition, the small number of students adopting an assimilation approach provides further evidence that the traditional uni-dimensional view of acculturation is now out-dated (Lee and Um, 1992).

Universities with a diverse cultural population should seek to understand the acculturation processes of their international students. In particular, the early stages of cultural adaptation are crucial and can be decisive in whether the student thrives both socially and academically or ultimately withdraws from the university. With UK universities under increasing competition from Australian and other English-speaking universities across the world (Arambewela, Hall and Zuhair, 2005), showing a genuine interest in their students' overall adaptation may be a means of gaining maximising retention and generating future positive word of mouth.

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